

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 3071264 8

## For Reference

---

**NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM**

# For Reference

---

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

Ex LIBRIS  
UNIVERSITATIS  
ALBERTAENSIS









The  
University of Alberta

" A STUDY IN ECUMENISM"

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the B. D. Committee in candidacy  
for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

By  
Robert Brodbeck Tillman

April 12th

1940.





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2018 with funding from  
University of Alberta Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/studyinecumenism00till>

Thesis  
1940  
#25, v.1

University of Alberta  
Faculty of the Arts and Sciences  
(Theology)

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that  
we have read the within thesis entitled

"A STUDY IN ECUMENISM"

submitted by Robert B. Tillman B.A. in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity  
and we hereby recommend its acceptance.

Edmonton  
Alberta.

April 12th  
1940.





" A STUDY IN ECUMENISM"

A Survey Of Some Aspects Of The Background  
Of European And American Theology.

By

Robert Brodbeck Tillman

St. Stephens College  
University of Alberta.

April 1940.



## CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	i
I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.....	1
II. ROOTS OF AUTHORITY.....	13
(i) The Teachings of Jesus	19
(ii) Thou Art Peter: Matthew 16:19	25
(iii) How did the church arise?	30
III. APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY AND "THE FIRST BORN SATAN".....	39
(i) Apostolic Authority	39
(ii) The "First-Born of Satan"	47
(iii) Resurrection of the Flesh	62
IV. CHURCH AND STATE.....	70
(i) Christianity, A State Religion	70
(ii) The Creed of Nicaea	74
(iii) The Coptic Church	87
(iv) The Great Schism of East and West	96
V. FEUDALISM AND THE ATONEMENT.....	111
VI. THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND.....	126
(i) The Reformation	126
(ii) The Anglican Church	
(Forces Determining it)	131
a. Political	135
b. Economic	144
c. Ecclesiastical	154
(iii) Conclusions	164
VII. THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE ON CHRISTIAN BELIEFS.....	169
(i) Up to 1859	172
(ii) England: 1859-1914	177
(iii) America: 1859-1940	188
VIII. THE BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM	202
(i) Separation of Church and State	204
(ii) Democracy and Individualism	211
(iii) Economic Abundance	222
(iv) The Puritan Spirit.	225
(v) Conclusions	230





IX.	CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN THEOLOGY.....	235
	(i) Pre-Depression Theology	237
	(ii) The Post-Depression Period	241
	(iii) The Future	255
X.	THE BACKGROUND OF GERMAN PROTESTANTISM..	272
	(i) The Reformers	273
	(ii) Church and State	280
	(iii) The Nineteenth Century	286
	(iv) The Influence of the War	293
	(v) The Present Situation	301
XI.	THE "EXISTENTIAL" THEOLOGY.....	309
	(i) Soren Kierkegaard	309
	(ii) German Schools of Theology	316
	(iii) Karl Barth	320
	(iv) Emil Brunner	329
	(v) Paul Tillich	334
XII.	UT OMNES UNUM SINT.....	346
	(i) Europe and America	346
	(ii) The Ecumenical Movement: Its Hope	350
	a. "How Can I Find a Gracious God?"	350
	b. A New World	351
	(iii) The Ecumenical Movement: Its Opportunity	354
XIII.	CONCLUSION.....	362

(Bibliographies are inserted at the end of each chapter. Primary sources are marked with an asterisk.)





## INTRODUCTION

The present ecumenical movement in the Provisional Committee for the World Council of Churches is seeking a formal structure of church organisation within which inter-communion among the various sections of the Christian Church can take place. A proposed constitution for the World Council of Churches was drawn up at Utrecht, Holland, May 12, 1938, and is now being submitted to the various Protestant denominations throughout the world. On this continent the official organ of the ecumenical movement is CHRISTENDOM, published by the American sections of the World Conference on Faith and Order and the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work.

There are many divisions in the Protestant world which the ecumenical movement is seeking to understand. The question raised in these pages is, "What are some of the reasons for the differences between European and American Christianity?"

At religious conferences European and American theologians often face one another across a gulf of misunderstanding which even the most able of them find it



11

difficult to bridge. (1) The European Protestant (2) is prone to regard his American brethren as rather unfortunate incarnations of the spirit of Rotary. And the latter all too often find it almost impossible to attain a sympathetic understanding of the theology of the former.

My essay, then, is an attempt towards some understanding of the fact that men who sincerely lay claim to an experience of God in Jesus Christ yet remain very seriously divided. (3)

---

(1) An important aspect of the solution of the problem of developing a mutual understanding is to be found in a semantic analysis of the meaning of the various faiths and creeds. The whole question of language and reality, of the informative and the emotive use of language, of "The Meaning of Meaning", as Ogden and Richards entitle it, is now in the forefront of contemporary philosophical discussion. Suggestive as the semantic approach is, it has been necessary to limit this treatment to a historical approach; other emphases occupy subsidiary positions.

(2) For obvious reasons only Protestant European and American theologies will be considered.

(3) AUBREY, p. 177-8, "No American who was at Oxford or Edinburgh could doubt that European Christians assumed that American delegates needed to be brought back to their sense in Christian thought...may we not insist that American religious experience is just as real as any other?" KELLER, p. 220ff., "American and European Protestantism must accept the fact that although they are one in origin, they are different in many significant respects...the discovery and acknowledgment of these differences is an important object of comparative studies which the ecumenical movement requires. See also W. A. VISSER'THOFT, "Europe Looks at America", and W. L. SPERRY, "American Christianity and the Church Universal".



Professor Flew maintains that it is only the doctrine of the church that really separates different communions from one another today. The real point of division lies much deeper. It is to be found in the question which tortured the mind of Luther: "What can I do to win a gracious God?" How shall I find salvation, life abundant? In doctrinal phraseology: how is the Grace of God mediated to mankind? The whole history of Christianity could be written in terms of the variety of answers that have been given to that question; and the whole problem of ecumenism. And it is from that standpoint that I shall make my own survey of the background of European and American theological outlooks.





## Chapter I

### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Chapter II discusses the history of the rise of the Christian church: this chapter sets down my method. I have already indicated the standpoint from which I shall proceed, namely, that the essence of our problem has to do with how God's grace is mediated to men. A further delimitation must be noted.

In general there are two methods of organising knowledge about any problem. One may ask what it is; analyse it, and determine the contents of it. Or, one may ask, how did it develop? Now it would be impossible to give anything like an adequate analysis of what the differences between European and American theologies are, as they now exist; without, that is, writing a complete history of the church, as well as several volumes on the psychology, sociology and philosophy of the Christian religion. Since the time of Darwin, however, we have been assured that to describe how states of affairs have developed does shed light on them, and it is that approach, the historical, which we shall adopt here.

What is meant by an historical approach, an historical fact? Ranke's dictum, "seek the facts as





2

they really happened", has fallen by the wayside, for we have come to recognize that all history is seen through the colored glasses of particular historians. The probable error in the writing of history is an imponderable which only time and the scientific spirit can uncover. But there is a vast difference between the undisciplined curiosity of a Pliny The Elder, and the organised methodology of a Charles A. Beard. The latter possesses certain canons of what might be termed scientific history, which the former lacked.(1) Operating within the limits imposed by such canons, Beard writes his history as an "act of faith": he believes that it is better to be explicit about one's bias than to claim to follow 'standpointlessness' that may only warp the material in ways for which neither the writer nor the reader can offer correctives.(2) His attitude is sound, I believe, and consequently I think that a brief statement of my own attitude to our problem, to Christianity, will make for greater clearness from the start.

Ever since the Greeks sought to understand the

(1) See, for example, the now classical treatment by LANGLOIS AND SEIGNOBOS.

(2) BEARD, 1, p. 219 ff. BEARD 2, p. 74 ff.



nature of the world the two principles of permanence and change, of continuity and development, of being and becoming, have remained the poles between which philosophies have oscillated in their expressions of truth. The phrase of Democritus, "atoms in motion" is still a good symbol for most systems of science, metaphysics or history. We are all, with him, forced to assume both an ultimate something as the basis of reality, and motion, change or variety in that ultimate constituent. Permenides, who held that change was illusion, and Heraclitus, who believed only change was real, are paradoxically enough both right. And nowhere so much as in theology.

For any approach to theology assumes, first of all, the fact (supra-rational though it may be) of the experience of God, and secondly, environments which shape the content and expression of that experience, from age to age. By environment is meant, among other things, the politico-economic framework, the ideological climate, and the leaders of the society in any period under discussion.

Many, who are unconsciously followers of Parmenides, believe with the epistle of Jude, that Christianity is something which "has once and for all been committed



to the Saints". (3) They recognize that there must be something permanent in Christianity, and they state it directly and forcefully. Others there are of the Heraclitan spirit who assert that Christianity is development. They recognize that there must be growth and change, and in thier eagerness to demonstrate that they tend to identify Christianity with the principle of change itself.

Both principles must be preserved; for they are necessary postulates of any rational historical approach to Christianity. There is a very real sense in which the difficulties of the ecumenical movement itself are rooted in confusion over what is permanent, continuous, eternal in the Christian religion, and what is changing, new and temporal. We shall see that confusion cropping up again and again in the course of our discussion.

But there are Christians who unwittingly follow Democritus in combining both emphases. They hold that Christianity is an attitude, a response to God, whose content varies with the situation in which it finds itself. They refuse to elevate any particular form of Christianity to the status

(3) Jude 1:3 (Moffatt).





of the UNA SANCTA; but insist that all varieties are admitted to the extent they embody that way of life which wields the materials of every given situation for the glory of God. I find myself in agreement with this group. Goodness, right relations with God and man, can only be achieved in and out of the material of every day contemporary situations. The verb is the important word in the saying, "Christianity is a historical religion". It is not only that Christianity WAS historical, but also that it continues to be so.

One of our greatest difficulties as human beings is that we tend to forfeit our birthright as sons of God by appropriating for our own needs answers to the problems of living which were devised by people in other ages under very different circumstances. We confuse the permanent and changing elements in our religion, and adopt as permanent truths about life statements which were the responses to God of other men in entirely different environmental settings.

This conflict between the need for the preservation of historical continuity on the one hand, and the necessity for men to make their own religious and moral decisions, on the other, is fundamental. Jesus spent a





good portion of his ministry combating man's tendency to slavishly follow the religion of his ancestors. And Christians, ironically enough have all too often been guilty of the same sterile, imitative mimicking of the pronouncements of their lord and master. Indeed I sometimes think we have been almost entirely innocent of the experience of Jesus, when he said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, ..but I say unto you..". And the consequence has been what it always is, a gross caricature of Jesus, his teachings, his spirit and his living religion.

The difficulty in large measure vanishes when men regard past solutions to the problems of living as part of the objective material given them for the meeting of their own. They do not then regard them as authoritative pronouncements for the moulding of their destinies, but as tools to be used for help in the living of them. What they do listen to from the past is the proclamation that there is a God to receive grace from, there is a life to be lived religiously.

As far as I can see, this proclamation, and the fact which it proclaims, are the only timeless constituents of our Christianity. Our religion (its church and its theology), is a developmental (4), a living thing. (5)

(4) CASE, Ch. 1.



It has not been once and for all delivered to the saints.

(5) It is dynamic rather than static, (6) gathered rather than given, (7) personal rather than authoritarian. (8)

The past does constitute an authority, but only when we respond to it by selecting those portions of it which help us in our living. The only authority that can be thought of in any absolute sense is God, and "we find God there where we hear his word, there where we meet his saving help". (9) For each group of individuals this will be different.

In spite of the present day reaction to the right in theology, I cannot escape the conviction that "once

---

(5) RALL p. 164 ff...p. 171, "Divine action and human freedom unite in this historical development (of the church) made not the less divine because we cannot point to particular results and say, "Here through God's direct or constraining action we have something that is absolute or final'".

AUBREY 2, p. 221, CASE, Op. Cit. p. 22 ff.

(6) AUBREY, Op. Cit. p. 219 ff.,  
CASE, Op. Cit. p. 24 ff.

(7) RALL, Op. Cit.

(8) FAITH AND ORDER p. 334.

(9) RALL, Op. Cit. p. 171.



and for all one can dogmatically assert dogmatism has been itself discredited".(10) Certainty is not God's way;(11) Jesus believed in an experimental faith, ('by their fruits ye shall know them'), and rarely appealed to authority.(12)

In recent times the eternal, the permanent element in Christianity has been unequivocally presented by Karl Barth: from the human side it is CREDO! "I BELIEVE", I recognize, I assent to, the God that is at hand. This act of recognition is common to all believers. The content of the act, how it is rationalized and explained to others, varies and necessarily is derived from the context of the situation in which it is met. Here lies the hope and the despair of the ecumenical movement. Its hope, in the fact that the differences between the various churches are not so fundamental as might appear at first glance; its despair, because we are all limited to our own experience and are loath to admit the validity of anything we do not know for ourselves.

(10) BIXLER, p. 152.

(11) RALL, Op. cit. p. 171.

(12) LIGON, p. 20;  
NELSON, THE EXPERIMENTAL LOGIC OF JESUS.





All men, whether they know it or not, are capable of attaining to the place where the new life dawns on the horizon of their lives, and they cry out, "CREDO!", in spite of themselves. And all men who are thus given "eyes to see and ears to hear", want the assurance that what they have found is the God they then seek. They want somehow to be certain they have found God's grace, that God has found them; and they want to be able to confess it so to others.

Our creeds and confessions have been, primarily, answers to this basic need in the lives of those who drew them up; indeed, the history of Christianity is marred by so many bitter battles just because what was fought over mattered so tremendously.

This essay is written as an investigation of the thesis that it is environmental factors which have shaped the content of Christian belief. A grasp of this problem is a necessary prerequisite for any attempt to understand the difference between American and European theology. As for procedure, we shall glance at several "crucial instances" in the history of the church in order to discover whether environment does mould the content of belief. Then we shall discuss certain factors responsible for the





variance in outlook between American and European  
Christianity today.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

For Preface and Chapter I

## Reference Title:

- AUBREY 1, E.A., "The Promise of American Theology", CHRISTENDOM, Spring 1938. \*
- AUBREY 2, E.A., "Christian Unity Static or Dynamic", CHRISTENDOM, Spring 1939. \*
- BEARD 1, C.A., "Written History as an Act of Faith", AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, V. 39, p. 210 ff.
- BEARD 2, C.A., "That Noble Dream", AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, V. 41, p. 74 ff.
- BIXLER, J.S., "The Philosophy of Religion", essay in the volume, "The Church Through Half a Century", Scribners, New York, 1936.
- CASE, S.J., "The Evolution of Early Christianity", University of Chicago Press, 1913.
- CHASE, S., "The Tyranny of Words", New York, Harcourt Brace Co., 1938. (Ch. VII - review (gden and Richards "The Meaning of Meaning"))
- FAITH AND ORDER, "The Second World Conference on Faith and Order", Macmillan, New York, 1938. \*
- KELLER, A., "The American Church Through European Eyes", CHRISTENDOM, Spring 1938. \*
- LANGLOIS AND SEIGNOBOS, "Introduction to the Study of History", London, 1898.
- LIGON, E.M., "The Psychology of Christian Personality", Macmillan, New York, 1936.
- NELSON, R.W., "The Experimental Logic of Jesus". "The Supernatural is the Natural", CHRISTENDOM, Summer 1939.



RALL, H./F. "The Church Given or Gathered", CHRISTENDOM  
Spring, 1939. \*

SPERRY, W.L., "American Christianity and the Church  
Universal", CHRISTENDOM, Winter 1938.

VISSER 'THCOFT, W.A., "Europe Looks at America",  
STUDENT WORLD, Spring 1931.



## Chapter II

ROOTS OF AUTHORITY

"The reign of God is near; repent, and believe this good news."(1) "Therefore the whole nation of Israel must understand that God has declared this Jesus whom you crucified is both Lord and Christ'. When they heard this they were stung to the heart, and they said ..... 'Brothers what shall we do?'"(2)

"First, then, in the place of Judas the traitor, Matthias was chosen by lot, who, as was shown above, was also one of the disciples of the Lord. There were appointed also, with prayer and the imposition of hands, by the apostles, approved men, with the office of deacons, for the public service."(3)

"I tell you, your name is Peter, a rock, and on this rock I will build my church."(4)

How did the Christian church begin? Was it founded by Jesus to be God's perfect instrument for the salvation of men? Or did it arise to meet the needs of first century followers of Jesus who eagerly awaited the expected parousia? Was it the task of Jesus to found a new order, a new set of rules, a new ECCLESIA for the redemption of mankind? Or was it the vision of God, the revelation of man seen in him which supplied both the

---

(1) Mark 1:15 (Goodspeed)

(2) Acts 2:36-37 (Goodspeed)

(3) EUSEBIUS p. 34

(4) Matthew 16:18 (Goodspeed)





goal and the means of salvation in those early days? Where, in other words, ARE the roots of authority in the Christian church?

It is characteristic of our own times that we are tempted, in answer to this question, to turn the pages of history in search of some vehicle of infallibility. The problem of how to find God, of how God finds us, is but one of many that are yielding to authoritarian solutions. And men turn back to primitive Christianity for confirmation of a view that somehow, somewhere God HAS delivered himself once and for all to mankind.

Before the first Great War the questions asked in the opening paragraph would have been answered in the spirit of Harnack's famous saying: "Christianity is the work of the Hellenic spirit on the gospel soil .... (the idea of) an unchanging dogma is illusion ... "(5) But the results of the war proved fatal to this attitude, as to many another doctrine of the Victorian and post-Victorian periods. The theological tide has changed, for, at the moment, it is running against all forms of relativism and men are searching once more for some rock

---

(4) HARNACK p. 5



of authority to which to anchor their faith. Matthew's famous passage did valiant service in this respect in the past, but it is only recently that Professor Flew has made a new effort to restore its reputation as the rock upon which the sovereign authority of the church, in spiritual matters, was built.(6)

Professor Flew's contention is important on two counts. He is a well respected and competent figure in the ecumenical movement and, secondly, his conception of the rise of the church rejects the developmental view from the beginning, and thus illustrates an extremist position whose over emphasis has tended to divide men down the centuries.

He holds that Jesus did consciously establish a new ECCLESIA, and that in it the early Christians "were seeing with their own eyes the fulfilment of the final purpose of God ..... God's final revelation of His purpose for mankind".(7)

We have seen that we have to predicate the two principles of continuity and change in order to approach

---

(6) FLEW, "Jesus and His Church".

(7) FLEW, p. 19, 13.



any historical problem. Flew seems to identify the ECCLESIA with the principle of continuity, of permanence; as if the ECCLESIA were something ultimate, and independent of environment, about which the entire flux of Christian history eddies and flows. In that case it is for him the means of grace, the answer to the cry of Luther, and to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost.

There is another view of the rise of the church. Namely, that Christianity was an experience of new life, a new outlook, a reorientation of values: "it was the impact of the human life of Jesus, exemplifying even unto death the life of love and humility".(8) And this was a continuing experience, not to be confined to any one moment of one's life or to any particular generation or, set of circumstances. The principle of permanence in this conception is found in just that experience of new life. It is an experience which is proclaimed not merely by the teaching but by the life of Jesus; and an experience the details of which are altered by the circumstances of each new age in which it occurs. In

---

(8) JACKSON, C. p. 49.





Jesus we see that the barriers between God and man are not the barriers we had thought them to be.(9) Luther's "How can I win God?", is answered in terms of repentance and the free grace of God seen in the life of Jesus.

Now these two concepts are fundamentally opposed, and to decide between them we must examine Flew's argument, and then make up our minds on the basis of the available evidence.

To return to Flew. He asserts that it was the intention of Jesus to found a new ECCLESIA which produced "the universal conviction of the early church that it was the true Israel".(10) He marshals the content and attitude of the New Testament to the support of Brunner's position, with which he is in hearty agreement, namely, "that Jesus Himself founded the church .... not only in

---

(9) SEELEY. "What Jesus was fully, we are in part. The divine nature which was perfect in Jesus is in us in broken fragments. Jesus was of our nature and he is of God's nature. In him we find the link between ourselves and God, not as beings that are essentially different but as beings that are essentially the same. The perfect communion between Father and Son is that which is possible for all of us. In the person of Christ we discover a personality in God which is akin to our personalities and a potentiality in ourselves which gives a motive to our striving and a purpose to the development of our highest instincts."

(10) FLEW p. 18.





the dogmatic sense but in the historical sense .... not as an ECCLESIA INVISIBILIS, as those who regard the church as a purely spiritual body would have us believe, but as a real community..."(11) And he argues the genuineness of Matthew's passage (16:18) on the grounds that if it is liberated from its context its ideas can be shown to be "congruous with the teachings of our Lord".(12)

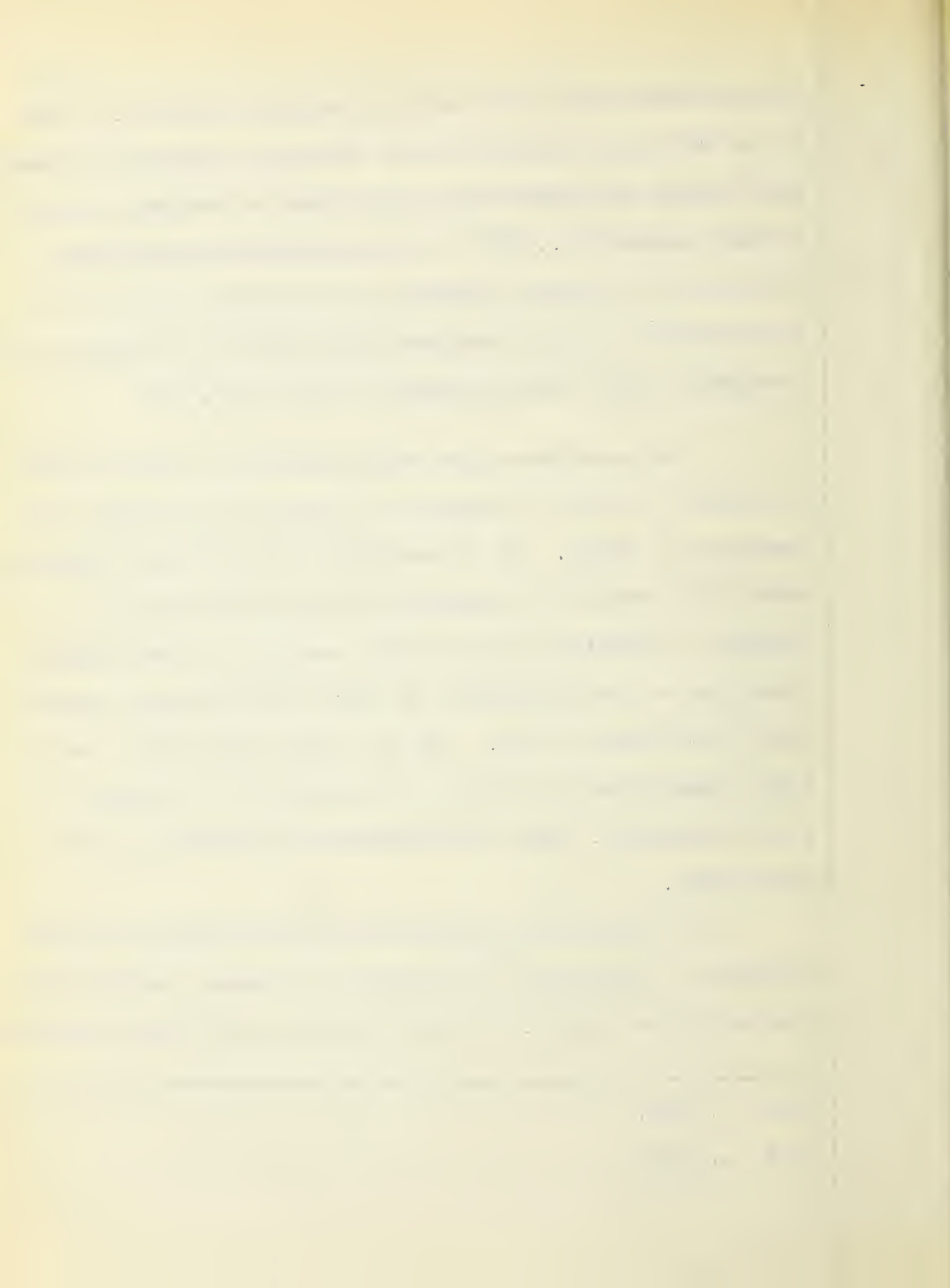
The question which this statement at once raises is whether or not it actually is true to the spirit and teaching of Jesus. It is undeniable that Jesus' principles were laid down for a community, that he did gather a company of disciples around him, and that he was deeply conscious of the imminence of that Kingdom whose members were the chosen of God. But all that may be true and it still remain that he never contemplated the founding of a new community, save the regenerated ECCLESIA of his own people.

In support of his position Flew appeals to three sources of authority: the teaching of Jesus, the life of the primitive church, and the writers of the New Testament

---

FLEW p. 136.

Ibid p. 136.

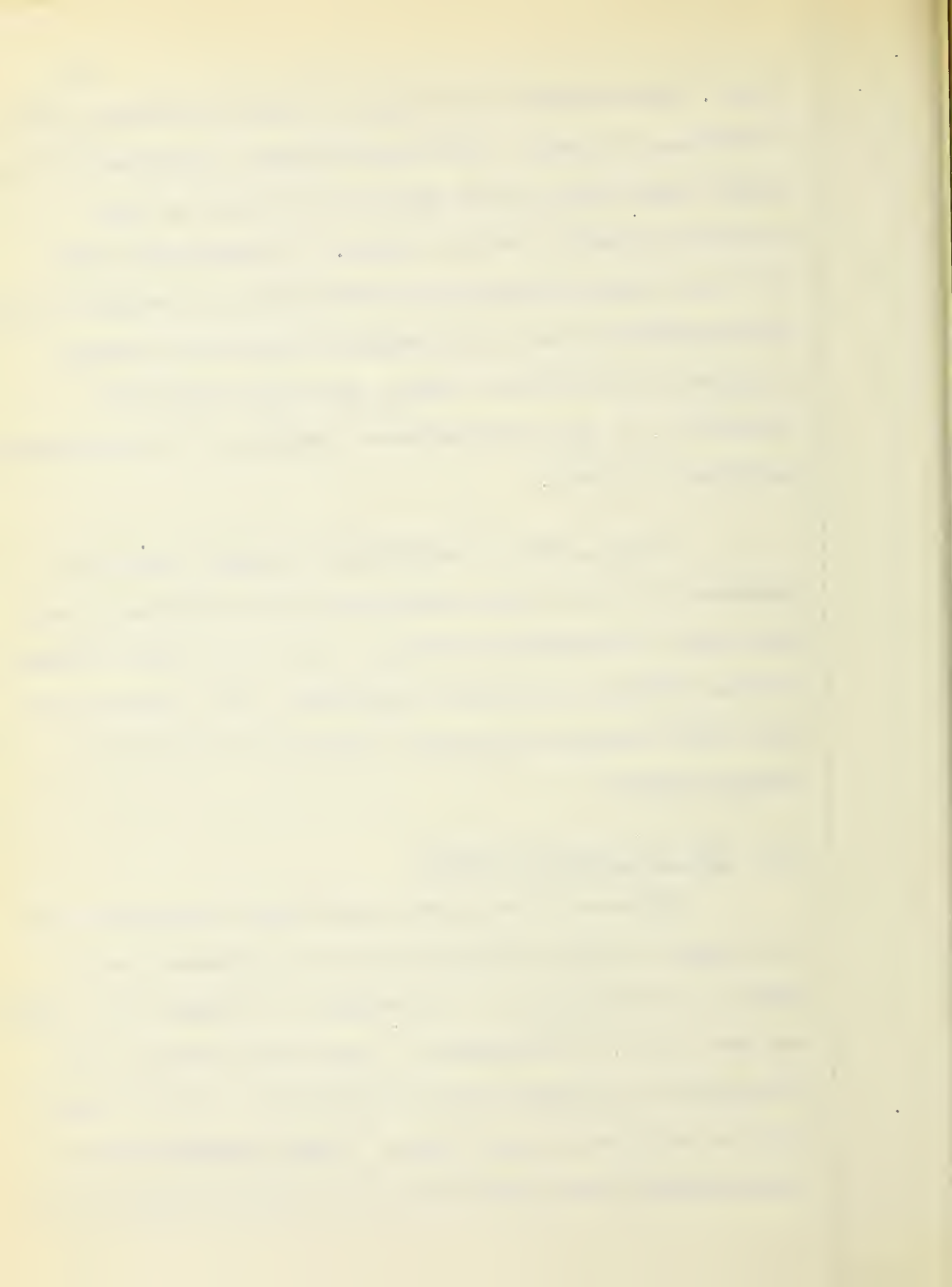


Canon. He includes the "Thou Art Peter" passage in the teachings of Jesus. The same ECCLESIA, discoverable in Jesus' teaching, is, he says, to be found in the primitive Church, and the Canon. Of course the fact that the marks of one type of ECCLESIA are present in all three merely raises the problem of where the concept originally came from: Jesus, the early Christian community, or the New Testament writers. It demonstrates nothing in itself.

We may, then, justifiably dispense with his argument from the early Church and from the Canon, and deal with a threefold problem: (1) Do we find evidence of the ECCLESIA in Jesus' teachings? (2) How are we to live with Matthew 16:17-19? -- and (3) How did the Church arise?

#### (1) THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Professor Flew states that Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God is one in which he stresses God's reign as sovereignty. The Reign, as a domain into which men can enter, is secondary. The Reign of God is the deliverance promised by the prophets for the last days, and the deliverance has begun. Jesus' Kingdom was an eschatological one but he does not know just when it is



to arrive. Hence the need for an interim community of those who await its arrival. The Rule of God, although not itself a community, "implies the gathering of a community".(13)

Such a concept of an "interim church" is quite an acceptable picture of what the Church meant to the early Christians. That Jesus held it is another matter. Flew himself admits that Jesus does not speak of himself as a nucleus for a new Israel.(14) As far as we know Jesus never thought of leaving his own "Church".(15) "He was and meant to remain a Jew."(16) His whole purpose was to preach the Kingdom, the Reign, the New Age, and the necessity of repentance. Like every good Jew, he believed in the absolute sovereignty of God; and although his idea of how the world operated was probably eschatological his conception of how men were to live was prophetic. (Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 10:25-37).

---

(13) Ibid p. 120-22.

(14) Ibid p. 26.

(15) JACKSON AND LAKE p. 296-299; p. 327 ff.

(16) MONTEFIORE CXXXVI. .







The significant thing is that he preached, "Repent, the reign of God is near"; and when they asked him what the secret of repentance was he referred them to two commandments which the Jews had possessed for centuries. Evidently the Reign of God was not only present and future, in the words of C. H. Dodd, a "realized eschatology", but in some manner it had always been! The growth of apocalyptic messianism in the years immediately after the death of Jesus has obscured this fact. I suppose it is a very simple thing; perhaps so simple that we tend to overlook it. We are often suspicious of an idea if it lacks complexity. But, be that as it may, the fact seems to be that Jesus took two old commandments, "Love God", and "Love Neighbour", united them, and felt and taught that all the rest of living flowed from them.(17) "Do that and you will live". (18)

He doesn't mention a community, an organisation; and why? Because they had their community, their organisation, their ECCLESIA. It was not a new community

---

(17) OMAN

(18) Luke 10:28 (Goodspeed)



that was needed, but a new attitude to God and man. Once that was obtained the community would become new. The Kingdom was both the Reign of God, and the new attitude in the hearts of men.

Possibly Flew's conviction that a new ECCLESIA was implicit in the teachings of Jesus springs from his inability to understand how anyone with a new revelation, a new dispensation from God, could help but propagate it. It is entirely logical that any person with such a new revelation would do just that. But, the point is, Jesus' message was an ancient one. It was older than Deuteronomy. The new attitude which he proclaimed was an old one which the Hebrews had never seen because they had forgotten that their Law and their Church were made for man, and not the opposite. God's Reign was possible for them if they simply obeyed God's two commandments, for this was the essence of the Law.(19) Jesus did not break with his own religious community: rather, he practised

---

(19) It is interesting to compare Jesus' summation of the Law with that of a contemporary, Rabbi Hillel: "That which thou hatest do not to thy fellow; this is the whole law; the rest is commentary; go and learn it". JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA, Vol. VI, p. 398. Even this admirable statement is just ethics: it was Jesus' concern to emphasize not only right conduct, but its source. He passes beyond the Law to the spirit beyond ethics to religion.





what they had preached, and they made the break with him!

All this is perfectly compatible with Jesus' eschatological cosmology.(20) Today we think of the universe as running down. In the time of Jesus the influence of Persian thought made them think of it as coming to a sudden end with the triumph of the spirit of goodness. But that idea in no way ruled out the thought that God was ruling up to the end. Hebrew history is one long record of a nation's consciousness of the government of God, of the demands of God. It is a record of the struggle between the concept that Yaweh demanded formal rites and ritualistic observance of the Law, and the idea that he wanted simply justice and love. Jesus raised his voice on behalf of the latter. It is extremely unlikely that he desired another community, another organisation, in the midst of all the confusion of groups

---

(20) That is, an eschatological outlook is compatible with a belief in a God who has always reigned, always been at hand. Whatever use Jesus made of eschatological terminology, he did so because it was the language of his times. But, though he used those terms, he nonetheless spoke a prophetic message. If messianism was very common during his life time he would be very much misunderstood. If it was rather something which spread rapidly in the period between his death and the destruction of Jerusalem, it is easy to understand how a certain amount of it was read back into his life by his later followers. In either case it is very difficult to believe, with some, that Jesus, a good Jew, thought of himself as God, or equal with God. That he thought himself especially united with God, in a way open to all, is much more likely.



that then existed in the Jewish scheme of living.

Jesus sought an about face, a regeneration, a return to God. If he had a new community in mind surely the disciples would have invoked its sanctions for their conduct. Yet James, the brother of Jesus, continues to appeal to the synagogue and to the Law for the principles by which to live. It took the death of Stephen, and the life-long insistence of Paul to emancipate the Judaistically-minded Christians from their slavish attitude to the Hebrew Torah. If it had not been for persecution at the hands of the most fanatical of the Jews at Jerusalem, and the conversion of Paul, it is extremely doubtful that the little band of Christians would have survived at all. They saw no reason for leaving their nation and their own ECCLESIA, until circumstance forced it upon them.

No, it is most unlikely that Jesus intended to found any new kind of ECCLESIA. As far as his teaching, and intentions are concerned, we might well say with Oman that "the founding of the society (the church) took place of itself".(21) Jesus' purpose was to turn the Law upside down, redirect men's thoughts to the true

---

(21) OMAN p. 620.





source of ethical conduct, and proclaim the fact of God's immediate presence among men. He did his work WHERE HE LIVED, among the Jewish people; and it was his people who rejected him, not he who rejected them! The new church which resulted arose because the narrow, legalistic Judaism of his own people could not contain the new wine of his life and teaching.

(2) MATTHEW 16: 17-19.

If the foregoing discussion is at all true to the mind of Jesus the foundation of Flew's case collapses. He based most of it on the statement that Jesus intended a new ECCLESIA. For the same reason his demonstration of the authenticity of the "Thou Art Peter" passage also falls to the ground.

Some account must be given, however, of its presence in our first gospel; we must know how we are going to live with it.

So many scholars hold that it is not authentic one wonders how Flew ever came to put forward his hypothesis at all. It is generally conceded to be an expansion of the parallel passage in Mark, "comparatively late and most improbably as genuine words of Jesus".(22)



As a matter of fact ~~Flew~~ does recognize the position of modern scholarship<sup>1</sup>, but only to disregard it. It will be useful to put down at this point a few common-places of gospel criticism:<sup>1</sup>

(a) Of the synoptic gospels Mark is the earliest.

(b) Mark was used as a written source by the authors of Matthew and Luke in the compilation of these later gospels.

(c) When these authors used Mark as source-material for their complete works the gospel of Mark had not yet come to be regarded as scripture; the later authors, compilers of Matthew and Luke, treated Mark with a freedom which can only mean that they saw nothing wrong in changing the Marcan narrative in the interest as they thought of a better portrait.

The close verbal dependence of Matthew and Luke upon Mark is demonstrable; the divergences where Mark is the source seem best accounted for on the hypothesis that the later writers have modified their source in conformity with their better understanding of the life and work of Jesus; this better understanding has come in part because of the greater source materials which their writings give evidence of, and in part because of the results of that matchless life on the lives of Christian people within the church.

An illustration will show with what freedom Mark was used by the later evangelists:

Matthew 8

Mark 1

Luke 4

14 his wife's mother lying sick of a fever.

30 Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell him of her;

38 And Simon's wife's mother was holden with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

15 And he touched her hand

31 and he came and took her by the hand and raised her up;

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever;

---

1. The writer is indebted to Prof. Clyo Jackson for the principles which follow. They represent conclusions of modern New Testament criticism which are inescapable.





and the fever left her; and she arose and minister- ed unto them.	and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.	and it left her and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them.
--	---	---

Attention is called only to the changes which have been made by the authors of Matthew and Luke; "took her by the hand and raised her up" of Mark has become in Matthew "touched her hand"; with Mark for source Luke reads instead "stood over her and rebuked the fever". Where Mark is the source which is obviously being used by the other evangelists to whom are the alterations due? It is difficult to escape the inference that at these points the author of Matthew and the author of Luke are modifying, even correcting what each may have regarded as less than the correct record in Mark.

In looking at the passage in question it is evident that Matthew and Luke both testify to the incident as from Mark, and that Matthew alone has the "church" section interpolated into the pericope:

Matthew 16:15	Mark 8:29	Luke 9:20
But who say ye that I am?	But who say ye that I am?	But who say ye that I am?
16 And Simon Peter answered and said	Peter answereth and saith unto him	And Peter answering said
Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.	Thou art the Christ.	The Christ of God.
17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.		
18 And I also say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.		
19 I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be		



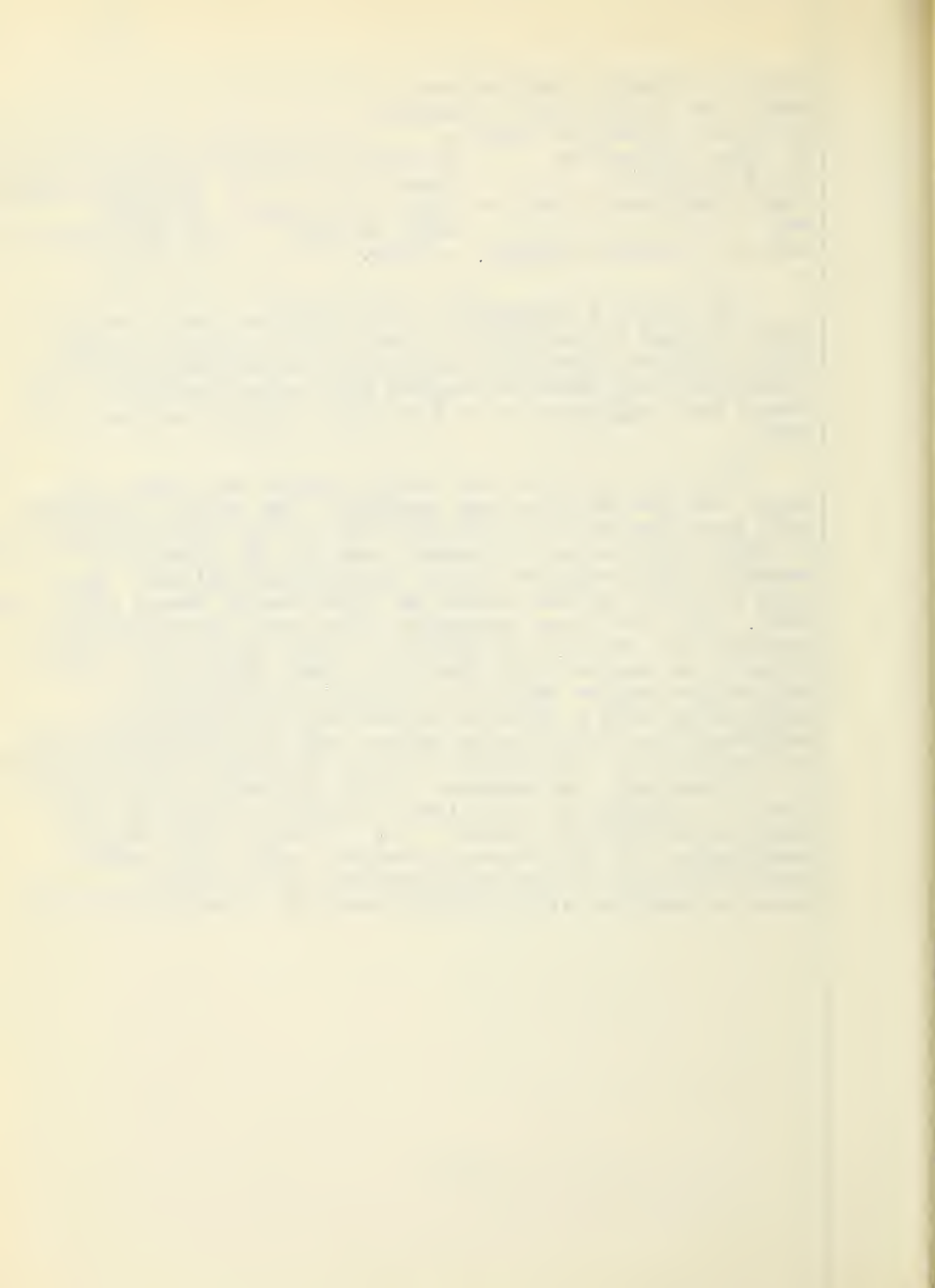


bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.	30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.	21 But he charged them and commanded them to tell this to no man;
---	---	---

The close dependence of both Matthew and Luke upon Mark is seen in the first lines of the passage quoted; it is further observable in the use of the command word "charged" when Matthew resumed the Marcan narrative; the Greek verb epitimaw is in the three gospels in the W. H. text.

Who has inserted the section about the rock, the keys, and the binding and loosing? The natural tendency with the passing of the years was for the later evangelists to exalt the person of Jesus, even to the extent of removing him from the normal human associations. Only Mark has the section about the brothers of Jesus (Mark 6:3), Mark, too, has those passages which seem provocatively unworthy of Jesus, and because of this both of the later Gospels do not contain them (e.g. Mark 3:19b-21). Of course the motive which had induced the author of Matthew to omit a section of his source can only be surmised; but when the omissions and the alterations are all in the same direction it would seem that the inference is trustworthy: the success of the Christian movement in the last quarter of the first century has colored the story of the earlier years. In a similar way, as the development of the church proceeded apace such organization as had become necessary was put down by a later generation as the fulfillment of a saying of Jesus.



The anachronistic character of the saying is even more obvious when it is compared with the only other passage in the synoptics where the word "church" is found:

"If he refuses to listen to them, tell the congregation. And if he refuses to listen to it, treat him as a heathen or a tax collector."(23)

It is incredible that these words should be spoken by him who was reproached for being a friend of publicans and sinners.

Dibelius characterizes the verses as "typical legend";(24) Streeter, "parasitic";(25) Warshaur: "a later invention";(26) Bacon: "Jewish midrash or haggadi";(27) Moffat: "Matthew's corrections are almost entirely topical";(28) Guignebert, cannot find in the gospels "any desire to predict, define or establish the church";(29) Holtzmann, Wellhausen, Jackson and Lake, Pfleiderer, Oman and many others deny its authenticity. Practically

(23) MATTHEW 18:17 (Goodspeed)

(24) DIBELIUS p. 115.

(25) STREETER p. 502.

(26) WARSCHAUR p. 199.

(27) BACON p. 219.

(28) MOFFAT p. 247.

(29) GUIGNEBERT p. 318.



everything in the synoptics which refers to the Christian ECCLESIA in Jesus' life time is found in Matthew. The evidence almost forces one to assume that it was Matthew's desire to show the continuity between the "Old Israel" of the Hebrews, and the "New Israel" of the Gentiles, which led him to introduce a Petrine legend into the text of his narrative.

At any rate several scholars (30) agree in the hypothesis that the passage reflects the struggle between the conservative followers of James, at Jerusalem, and the liberal followers of Paul. James, the Judaiser, and Paul, the Helleniser, were the two extremes between which Peter wavered, although he also regarded himself as an apostle to the Gentiles.(31) Matthew's solution to the rupture is to represent Peter, and the mediating position of the Antiochan tradition, as the basis upon which the church is built. In what might well be called the first ecumenical pronouncement, Peter is made to explain, at Acts 15:7ff., that there is no real difference between the heathen and the Jews, that God cleanses both their hearts

---

(30) STREETER p. 258, 504, 515;  
BACON Part II, Ch. XV, Part IV:IV;  
JACKSON AND LAKE p. 330.

(31) ACTS 10: 1-11; GALATIANS 2:11 ff.





by faith. Up to that point in the early church there had been very bitter conflict between the "clean" and "unclean", and even this was not sufficient to clear up the strife. For Paul was to lose his life in his final effort to bridge the gap, and unite Jewish and Gentile Christianity.

It was these same issues of church life which produced the gospel of Matthew, reflecting as it does both Jewish and Gentile Christianity. It was written towards the end of the first century, old animosities were dying and the idea of a united church, broad enough to include both factions, was growing up.(32) In his book Matthew puts forward a foundation for such a church, and as its chief corner stone Peter, the compromiser, and his apostolic claims.

Matthew 16:17-19, in other words, can be described as another "ecumenical confession of faith": in it Jew and Gentile unite in their quest for God. We must take note of a significant difference between this passage and the first ecumenical formula put in the mouth of Peter at Acts 15:7 ff. In the latter, Peter simply

---

(32) SCOTT Ch. 4; MONTENIORE LXXVII





says that God cleanses the hearts of both parties by faith. In the former, Peter's assertion of a common experience of the cleansing power of God causes Matthew to single him out as the basis for a new church; and to make Jesus confer upon him an organisational authority rooted, not in an experience of the power of God, but in the interaction of a particular set of environmental factors which made his position of most value for Christianity at the moment.

Just as the witness of the first Christians shifted from the preaching of the good news about God to the preaching of the messiahship of Jesus, so our first ecumenical confessions shifted from a statement about the free grace of God to one about an apostolic authority bestowed on Peter by Jesus. To say that such shifts occurred is not to say that the first group knew more about the permanent elements in religion. But it does mean that we have never clearly grasped the distinction between what is ultimate and what is purely relative in our Christianity. Matthew confused the permanent and the changing principles of his religion. Perhaps he could not help it; perhaps he had as deep a vision as anyone could expect from a person caught, as he was,



between two opposing outlooks on life. That may be so, but we shall have cause to remark how, in succeeding years, it was the same kind of confusion which solidified lasting differences between the various churches, that broke away from the main current of Christianity.

In conclusion, unless like Flew, we avoid the results of modern scholarship, it is only possible to live with the "Thou Art Peter" story if we regard it as a product of early apostolic strife inserted by Matthew into his account. For him it was an adequate basis upon which to unite the divided Christianity of his day. The passage is not an historical statement of fact. It is, in a pre-doctrinal period, an important statement of doctrine for an on-going church.

### (3) HOW DID THE CHURCH ARISE?

"If Jesus preached the Kingdom, his followers preached him":(33) Mark 1;15 became Acts 2:36. Whatever happened between the crucifixion and Pentecost, we find at the latter time that the group of people whom Jesus had left behind him were living a simple communal life within the Jewish church.(34)

---

(33) Montefiore CXXIV

(34) Acts Ch. 2.



This early church was characterized not only by any Petrine authority, but by two things besides a common worship: the spirit, and a belief in Jesus as Lord and Christ. Jesus was evidently replacing the Torah as the saving revelation of God's will, although there was actually little serious conflict over the two at the outset. This first attempt to realize the spirit of one who had taught that love of God and man were the sole laws of the Kingdom, did catch something of his forbearance, tenderness and humility. And these qualities made so vivid an impression upon their minds that they called him Messiah at a time when, to any first century Jew, the concept of a flesh and blood Messiah must have been exceedingly repugnant. It was the highest category in their thinking, and they could do nothing less than place him in it. They felt that Jesus had risen, knew that his spirit was theirs and they went ahead in the exuberance of that experience to preach the salvation of Christ crucified.

As the church moved into the Greek world it carried the same double pattern with it: it preached the salvation of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen; and it lived, wrote and talked of the kind of life which they were able to live because of what he had done for them.





Throughout the letters of Paul, and the whole New Testament, there ran a golden thread which never lost touch with the spirit they had gained from him.(35) At first Judaistic, the church became Hellenized and then Latinised. But for Paul, "basically it was the life of Jesus, lived among his fellow-Jews within the limitations of first-century ideas and ideals, that made the Christian Church. To his intimate followers that life came as a revelation of God. In it they saw the possibilities of their own lives; to that goal they gave themselves without stint in the spirit they had caught from him..."(36) Through Jesus they had a sense of a direct relationship with God, and were set free from their fears. The power that moved the church, the experience which gave birth to it, continued even in the midst of the vicious quarrels which plagued it, particularly after it became an imperial church.

The quarrels and divisions were also there from the beginning. In the first place, the spirit of Jesus

---

(35) Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 2:12-16; 3:8-9; Colossians 3:3-16; Galatians 5:22-23; 25; 6:1-5; Romans 8:37-39; 1 Corinthians 13.

(36) JACKSON, C., p.43.



could not be confined to the categories of Jewish messianism. The narrow, Judaistic shell of our first Christian theology did not satisfy the Greeks. Luke makes James (Acts 15:1) look back to the traditions of his ancestors, to what had been established by God for his chosen ones in the days of Abraham. And the James group died out as a small remnant, the Ebionites. Paul looked ahead to the Gentile world to which he was inexorably impelled by the spirit of James. A new environment demanded new statements about Jesus, about Jesus' good news, and about the religion of his ancestors. Paul fashioned them and some of them still live even today.

To the Jews Jesus had been Messiah. For the Greeks he was Christ and Lord. The difference between the two environments produced a first class ecumenical problem, and one never entirely solved. One of the main reasons the division was never healed was that when they came to discuss the nature of God and Christ, the disputants laid too much stress on the thought categories which suited their various minds, and too little on their common (supposedly) experience of God in Jesus Christ.

This then was the church: a saving experience of God in Jesus (the spirit), a doctrine about Jesus, and,



significantly, a divided body in their loyalty to Jesus.

All this began, to return to our original question, in an experience of God in Jesus; and from that took form under pressure of the logic of necessity. In the course of its expansion in the Graeco-Roman world the church found it required some criterion for genuine spiritual experience; and so the canon, the creed, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy were established as sources of authority, assured norms for the recognition of God's grace. (37) The simple statement of Peter, (38) that you must repent, be baptized and then receive the gift of the holy spirit, became greatly amplified and complicated as time went on. The expected parousia became more and more a belief of the past, and the size and influence of the Christian

---

(37) LIETZMAN p. 72.

(38) ACTS 2:38.





group multiplied rapidly. The real roots of authority were bruied under a luxuriant growth of new approaches to the reality of God and new claimants to the mediatorship of his grace. Holy Spirit gave place to Holy Creed, Holy Church, and in the Reformation, to Holy Scripture. But the real roots were never entirely lost. Whatever of life the other developments possessed was due to them; indeed without that spirit of God which the first Christians saw in Jesus, each of the succeeding periods would be unexplainable. At the risk of repetition I repeat what has just been written because we shall return to it throughout our discussion, and I believe it is fundamental to an understanding of our contemporary church situation.

It was an experience of God in Jesus that caused his followers to elevate him to the category of divinity. And it was experience of that same spirit in the Christians, which drew others to them in the days that followed. "see how these Christians love one another", was the dynamic, the permanent element in the rise of the church, even as it had been in the life of him upon which the church was founded. It was their belief that in Christ's love for them, in their love for one another, they had found God and God had found them!



The roots of authority lay in an experience which "stung to the heart", in a life which was the incarnation of the love it taught and preached, and in fact that God's Kingdom was at hand. This is the permanent factor in Christianity, transcending all environments, and yet in them all. What changes is the content of the experience of repentance and CREDO, and the manner in which it is worked out in concrete terms. We turn now to glance at certain cross-sections in the evolution of the church. We shall find that at every step the same question is being asked, and answered: how can I find God, how can God find me? And we shall remember that in the beginning was the vision of God seen in the life of Jesus.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Chapter II

- BACON, B.W., "Studies in Matthew", New York, Henry Holt, 1930. \*
- DIBELIUS, M., "From Tradition to Gospel", London, Nicholson and Watson, 1934.
- ENSLIN, M.S., "Christian Beginnings", New York, Harpers, 1938.
- EUSEBIUS, "An Ecclesiastical History", Cruse's Translation, London, S. Bagster, 1836.
- FISHER, G.P., "History of Christian Doctrine", New York, Scribners', 1911.
- FLEW, R.N., "Jesus and His Church", London, The Epworth Press, 1938. \*
- GUIGNEBERT, G. "Jesus".
- HARNACK, A., "Outline of the History of Dogma", New York, Funk and Wagnall, 1893. \*
- JACKSON, Clyo, "Environmental Factors in Christian History", Chicago, University of Chicago, 1939, Essay, "The Hellenization of Jewish Messianism in Early Christianity". \*
- JACKSON, F.C., and LAKE, K., "The Beginnings of Christianity", London, Macmillan, 1920, 5 Vols, X.
- LATOURETTE, K.S., "A History of the Expansion of Christianity", 3 Vols., New York, Harpers, 1937, '38, '39. \*
- LIETZMANN, H., "The Founding of the Church Universal", Woolf's translation, London, Nicholson and Watson, 1938.
- McGIFFERT, A.C., "A History of Christian Thought", Vol. I, New York, Scribners', 1932. \*





- MCNIELE, A.H., "An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament", Oxford, Clarendon, 1928.
- MOFFAT, J., "Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament", London.
- MOFFAT, J., "The First Five Centuries of The Church", London, University of London, 1938.
- MONTEFIORE, C.G., "The Synoptic Gospels", London, Macmillan, 1927.
- OMAN, J., "Church", article in HASTINGS ENCYCLOPEDIA RELIGION AND ETHICS, Vol. III, New York, Scribners', 1911. \*
- SCOTT, E.F., "The Literature of the New Testament", New York, Columbia University, 1932.
- STREETER, B.H., "The Four Gospels", London, Macmillan, 1926.
- WALKER, W., "A History of the Christian Church", New York, Scribners', 1918.
- WARSCHAUER, J., "The Historical Life of Christ", New York, Macmillan, 1927.

THE NEW TESTAMENT \*



## Chapter III

APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY AND THE "FIRST-BORN OF SATAN"

"And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him on one occasion, and said, 'Dost thou know me?' 'I do know thee, the first-born of Satan.'"(1)

"His disciples will not deny that his first faith he held along with ourselves; a letter of his own proves this; so that from the future a heretic may from his case be designated as one who, forsaking that which was prior, afterwards chose out for himself that which was not in times past."(2)

How did the Apostles' Creed come to its present state? It represents the earliest and most nearly universal standard of faith, <sup>in which</sup> orthodox Christianity has expressed <sup>itself</sup> ~~possesses~~, and, since many of our churches still retain it, an understanding of its development is indispensable for any discussion of the creedal basis of the ecumenical movement.

(1) APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY.

When Christianity burst the bonds of Judaistic Messianism it emerged into a gentile world so different from its Palestinian home that the Greek and Jewish

---

(1) IRENAEUS, Bk. III: III-4.

(2) TERTULLIAN, I: I.



elements of which it was composed were never entirely reconciled.(3) The early Christians won their fight for independence from Judaism, only to be confronted with Gnosticism, a movement which represented "the Gentile peoples in their quest for redemption".(4)

Gnosticism was a syncretistic religio-philosophical movement, an attempt at a world religion, a species of mental culture; dualistic in all its various forms, it appealed to the spirit in support of its contentions, and sought to replace the Christian God of creation and redemption by a God of pure spirit whose only contact with the evil world of matter was through a succession of emanations which proceeded from him.(5)

---

(3) LATOURETTE, I:338; for an interesting instance of Graeco-Judaistic compromise see THE DIDACHE, IX: 1-3: "...concerning the Cup, 'We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David thy child, which thou didst make known to us through Jesus, thy child' .....and concerning the broken Bread: 'We give thanks our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy child'".

(4) CARLYON p. 115.

(5) CARLYON p. 115, 122; HARNACK 2, Ch. IV; McGIFFERT p.151 HARNACK III:3, LATOURETTE p. 338 ff.





"The later epistles of the New Testament give us a reflection of the earliest struggles against various heresies. At length gnosis unfolded all its glamor and its might, and Valentine, as well as a thousand others with similar ideas, proclaimed the superiority of a pneumatic, who had received gnostic illumination, over and against the churches commonplace writings which moved to and fro on the level of everyday life, and ere bound to traditions and literal forms."(6)

The Gnostics were the theologians of the first centuries, the first to transform Christianity into a system of doctrine: "they forced the issue. They demanded that the practical way of life offered by the Christian preacher be supplemented by a theoretical solution of the deep intellectual problems of alert minds of the day. Man's salvation must be coupled with a respectable system of thought".(7)

The result was that Christianity had either to form its own doctrines, its own theology, or give way before the various varieties of Gnosticism.(8) Carlyon and others have traced for us the points at which the impact of the Gnostic movement made itself felt in the

---

(6) LIETZMANN p. 72.

(7) CARLYON p. 122.

(8) LIETZMANN p. 72; MOFFAT 2 p. 78; WALKER p. 60; FISHER p. 60.



rise of Christianity. I enter at this point certain of Carlyon's illustrations in order to emphasize the influence of polemical thought in the shaping of Christian writings.<sup>(9)</sup> For recent investigators on the Apostle's Creed, have unduly minimized the role the Gnostics and the Marcionites played in its formation.

(9) CARLYON p. 116-120:

Pauline Christianity is full of unmistakably Gnostic conceptions: flesh becomes evil, man is lost, God is far away and justly angry; the "humble Jesus is transformed into the figure of a divine redeemer. The good news of God's gracious favor gives way to a theology of atoning sacrifice." The notion of salvation as a mystery delivered to the preacher by his Lord, and to all those "in the spirit" who thus make up the true "Body of Christ", is fullest expressed in Ephesians 1:23; 2:20ff; 4:12ff; 5:23ff; /

Christ is the supreme figure among the super-human figures of the world (Colossians 1:15; 2:10). He conquered the demonic powers, (Colossians 2:15). Union with Christ promises salvation (Romans 8:18ff., I Cor. 15:22ff.). Sin and death are conquered through Jesus (I Cor. 15:54ff.). Gnostic insistence on a spiritual immortality has modified Paul's Jewish inheritance to the point where he thinks of a "spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:37-44). Mystical union with Christ yields divine life: (Rom. 8:1, II Cor. 5:17). Anti-Gnostic polemic is reflected in the Gospel of John (see Moffatt p. 530 ff.) in I John (1:1; 2:3-6; 4:1ff.; 2:26), in Hebrews against docetism (10:19-24), and in I Tim. (2:5 ff), II Tim. (4:18), Titus (3-4), Jude (5:3,4,8) and II Peter (2 and 3) the influence of the heretics is plain. Heffern shows that the whole New Testament contains at least eleven of the distinctive marks of the gnostic movement. The long list of works against heretics which we have in the Fathers such as Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen is conclusive evidence of our contention.





Christianity dwelt, doctrinally speaking, in the midst of chaos; for Gnostic sects were legion. The age demanded rational thought, and the Christians preferred their own system of ethics inherited from their Hebraic ancestry. What made the struggle particularly difficult was that the Gnostics appealed to the same spirit as sanction for their pronouncements as did the Christians. Nor could the Christians point to moral character as a test, for many of the Gnostics led pious, sincere and devoted lives.

It was Irenaeus whose replies to the threats of the heretics laid the foundation of the new faith. He first of all set down that all truth must be in harmony with apostolic teaching, which had been given the apostles directly by Jesus.(10) But this only raised the question of who was to judge the apostolicity of any given beliefs. Irenaeus' answer was, the apostolic writings, the scriptures, "the ground and pillar of our faith".(11) But here again he was on slippery ground, for the Gnostics were experts at making texts serve their arguments. Irenaeus well knew the difficulty and

---

(10) Irenaeus Book 3: Pref.

(11) Irenaeus Book III: Ch. 1.





he raises the question of what would have happened if the apostles had not left us scriptures: "would it not be necessary (in that case) to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?" (12)

Both Irenaeus, and his elder contemporary, Tertullian, recognized the difficulty, and announced that the Apostolic Rules of Faith were the norms by which all religious experience and doctrine were to be judged. Simple baptismal formulas were used in the churches and they were now given an anti-gnostic turn to satisfy the demands for some form of authority. (13) They both give several versions, and the one quoted is of special interest here because it is an attempt to establish the unity of the faith throughout the whole world. It is another ecumenical confession, comparable with the two we have already mentioned:

"The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: (She believes) in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and the sea and all the things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus,

(12) IRENAEUS III: Ch. IV:1

(13) HARNACK III:25-28: "What was needed was an apostolic creed definitely interpreted; for it was only by the aid of a definite interpretation that the creed could be used to repel the Gnostic speculations and the Marcionite conception of Christianity."



the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His (future) manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father 'to gather all things in one', and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, 'every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess' to Him, and that He should execute judgment towards all; that he may send 'spiritual wickedness', and the angels who transgressed and became apostates, together with the ungodly, and unrighteous, and wicked, and profane, among men, into everlasting fire; but may in the exercise of his grace, confer immortality on the righteous, and holy, and those who have kept His commandments, and have persevered in His love, some from the beginning (of their Christian course) and others from (the date of) their repentance, and may surround them with everlasting glory.....the Church, although scattered, believes these points (of doctrine) just as if she had but one soul..... For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same....." (14)

But this was not the only arrow they had in their quiver: they appealed from scripture and creed to the bishops who possessed apostolic credentials, (15) who had, in other words, received their offices in regular succession from the apostles. "Let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning", (16)

---

(14) IRENAEUS Book I, Ch. X: 1 and 2.

.....  
TERTULLIAN I, 1:22.

(16) TERTULLIAN I, 1:22.





said Tertullian, as he worked to establish an apostolic standard of authority that to us seems farther removed than ever from the original impulse which gave birth to the Christian movement.

Nevertheless, it was the impelling necessity of somehow guarding that spirit they had received from their Master, which led them to invoke apostolic authority. But in the doing of it an absolute sanction was bestowed on the past, vital experience gave way to doctrine, 'pistis' was replaced by 'gnosis', and apostolic became synonymous with Christian.

"A Christology and a theology became imperative. The simple beginnings of Paul and John were no longer adequate. They might have developed into the Gnostic position almost as well as that coming to be held by traditional Christianity. Once this task was understood it was undertaken. Over against the post-resurrection experience of the Gnostic Christians the Church Fathers set the historical life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. The sacrifice upon Calvary was genuine and accomplished something both in the conquest of demons and also in the salvation of men. His resurrection body was the first fruits of the resurrection of Christian believers of all ages. Jesus took his place with Plato and the philosophers as the world's master-mind. And yet the Gnostics won, in part. The simple monotheism of Judaism gave way to a learned doctrine of a three-person deity, of which the second and third persons in their relationship to the first were markedly similar to what the gnostics had called emanations."

(17)





The needs of the church, liturgical, catechetical and confessional, would have and did produce rules of faith. However, it was the Gnostic heresies, and the need for a standard with which to repel them, that determined the content of the creeds; and the doctrine which was to lay the dead hand of tradition upon a living church, the dogma of apostolic authority. Walker puts the matter very succinctly: "As a recent German writer has epitomized the change: 'About 50 he was of the church who had received baptism and the Holy Spirit and called Jesus, Lord; about 180, he who acknowledged the rule of faith (creed), the New Testament canon, and the authority of the bishops.'" (18)

## (2) THE FIRST-BORN OF SATAN

Among the Gnostics none proved more of a menace to the orthodox than the followers of Marcion, whom Polycarp had characterized as "The first-born of Satan". Marcion was a Christian, and a good one: devoted, sincere, intelligent and an excellent organizer. (19) In the year 144 A.D. his church at Rome excommunicated him on account of the heretical nature of the

---

(18) WALKER p. 60.

(19) BURKITT Ch. IX.



reforms which he was trying to get it to adopt. As is well known, he proceeded to organize his own church, and did it so effectively that Marcionite congregations were, at one time, almost as numerous as those of the orthodox. They were frequently better organized too, both institutionally and doctrinally, and traces of their church survived until the seventh century.

We can imagine, having seen the reaction which the ordinary Gnostics produced in the Christians, just how bitter the protest against Marcion must have become. Tertullian and Irenaeus devote many pages to him alone, the latter a whole book. Most of the Gnostics paid little attention to organization, but here was a group who built up a strong opposition church with a well-defined, aggressive set of doctrines. The orthodox were hard pressed to make absolutely clear their points of difference.

It is McGiffert's thesis that the Old Roman (which lies behind the present Form of the Apostles' Creed) Symbol, the basis of the Rules of Faith paraphrased by Irenaeus and Tertullian, and the source of our Apostles' Creed, was "framed in opposition to Marcion with the purpose of guarding candidates for church-membership against his errors." (20) Consequently, much that was vital in the faith was omitted. (infra p. 54)





But doubt cast on the argument set forth by McGiffert requires that we examine it again, to determine for ourselves whether the truth lies with him or with his opponents. (21) They hold that the Symbol, and the Apostles' Creed, was simply a positive statement of faith, an expansion of the baptismal formula independent of existing errors.

McGiffert traces our present Apostles' Creed back to what is known as the Old Roman Symbol, which is quoted in a work by Rufinus of Aquileia, written about 400 A.S., and a letter of Marcellus of Ancyra, written some sixty years earlier. Our earliest sources for the Symbol are paraphrases of it found in Irenaeus and Tertullian, similar to the one quoted on page 44. I quote another source passage from Irenaeus, and one from Tertullian:

".....he has a full faith in one God Almighty, of whom are all things: and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom are all things, and in the dispensations connected with Him, by means of which the Son of God became man; and a firm belief in the Spirit of God, who furnishes us with a knowledge of the truth, and has set forth the dispensations of the Father and the Son, in virtue of which He dwells with every generation of men, according to the will of the Father." (22)

---

(21) LIETZMANN, HARNACK A., HOLL, MOEHLMANN.

(22) IRENAEUS, Bk. IV. 33:7





"We....believe that there is one only God, but under the following dispensation....that this one only God has also a Son, His Word, who proceeded from Himself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. Him we believe to have been sent by the Father into the Virgin, and to have been born of her--being both Man and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God, and to have been called by the name of Jesus Christ; we believe him to have suffered, died and buried, according to the scriptures, and after He had been raised again by the Father and taken back to heaven, to be sitting at the right hand of the Father, and that He will come to judge the quick and the dead; who sent also from heaven from the Father, according to His own promise, the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and in the Son and in the Holy Ghost." (23)

A critical study of these and other passages (24) yields this reconstruction of the Symbol as it existed sometime in the latter half of the second century:

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, and in Christ Jesus his ONLY BEGOTTEN son our Lord, who was born of THE HOLY SPIRIT and Mary the Virgin, was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried, on the third day rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth on the right hand of the Father, from whence he cometh to judge quick and dead; and in Holy Spirit, HOLY CHURCH, REMISSION OF SINS, resurrection of the flesh." (25)

The capitalized words are later additions, and the Creed as a whole stands as it was quoted by Rufinus and Marcellus. Some state that the existence of certain of the phrases from this Symbol, and from the passages mentioned

(23) TERTULLIAN II, Ch. II

(24) IRENAEUS, Bk. I, Ch. X:1; III, Ch. 4:2; V.20:1; TERTULLIAN I, Ch. 13, 36; TERTULLIAN 3, Ch. I.

(25) MCGIFFERT 2, p. 6-7.



in Irenaeus and Tertullian, in earlier documents, is evidence for an earlier dating of the Creed. It is as reasonable to suppose that all they indicate is the development of the familiar clauses which were used in the Creed; and they were under the same necessity of confuting error, as was the Creed into which they were inserted.

Three sources for the Roman Symbol are described by McGiffert:

(1) Formulated answers to Marcionite heresies.

McGiffert's postulate is that

^The Symbol was drawn up to impress upon converts the facts and truths most widely doubted at the time: it was devised to shut out the Gnostics, and particularly the followers of Marcion. The clause by clause correspondence of heresy and answer is best seen when they are set down side by side:

MARCION SAID: (26)

THE CREED SAID:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>(a) The Christian God is not the harsh, creator-ruler of the Universe; but another loving, redemptive Being, revealed in Christ.</p> | <p>(a) "I believe in God, the Father Almighty": that is, all-ruling, all governing.</p> |
|---|---|

---

(26) See especially Tertullian, "Against Marcion" I:5, and all anti-heretical writings of the early churches, McGiffert 2.





- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (b) Jesus Christ is the son of the latter God, not the former. | (b) "in Jesus Christ <u>His</u> son...."  |
| (c) The Christian God of love will judge noone.                | (c) "Sitteth on the right hand of the Father, from whence he cometh to judge quick and dead...."  |
| (d) Jesus was not a man, but a spirit in a man's body.         | (d) "born of Mary the Virgin, was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried, on the third day rose from the dead, ascended into heaven...." |
| (e) There is no resurrection of the flesh. Matter is evil.     | (e) "resurrection of flesh." (27)   |

This leaves the clause "Holy Spirit" the only one unaccounted for, and it is very significant that there is no comment on it in the Creed, for this is the one point where Gnostic and Christian were agreed. That it entered the Creed at all is likely due to its presence in the primitive baptismal formulas upon which the Symbol was based.

#### (ii) Old Baptismal Formulas.

It is commonly assumed that the triune formula of Matthew 28:19 was the one used <sup>in the Creed.</sup> McGiffert claims it

- (27) That is, "σπρκο's ἀνάστασις", in Latin, "caruis resurrectionem".





is too philosophical a statement, and would be out of place in the Roman Symbol, which reflects no sign of the metaphysical controversies of the Eastern churches. Some formula like "Into the name of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit," akin to Paul's benediction in 2 Cor. 13:13, is a much more probable basis. (28)

(iii) Third and Fourth Century (and later) Additions.

These are represented by the capitalized words and certain other phrases added after the fourth century. (29)

"ONLY BEGOTTEN", and born of "THE HOLY SPIRIT", were probably added somewhere between the years 190 and 240 when disputes with heretics had shifted ground, and it was necessary to impress on the minds of converts not so much that Christ was a man, as that he was divine

The phrases "HOLY CHURCH", and "REMISSION OF SINS" were added because of the controversy over post-

(28) McGIFFERT 2, p. 180 ff.

(29) "Eternal Life", possibly added to round out the Creed and indicate the Christian consequences of the expected resurrection of all flesh. (Irenaeus, Bk. I:10). "Descended into hell"; "Catholic" Church; "maker of heaven and earth".



baptismal forgiveness of sins. They assert that the orthodox church is in possession of the means for such forgiveness, and that whatever the lapses these may seem to lead to, the church remains the "holy" church, the custodian of the grace of God.

From these three sources the second century church at Rome constructed a Baptismal Symbol as a protection against the Marcionitic heresies camped on its very doorstep. (30)

Thus, McGiffert argues, a Creed became a rule of faith for later generations, <sup>a creed</sup> which omitted much that was essential in the faith of those who drew it up:

"Its polemic character is made evident both by what it asserts and even more by what it omits. There is no reference in it to the Kingdom of God, the Messiahship of Jesus, his fulfilment of prophecy, his divinity, his pre-existence, his baptism, his teaching, his revelation of God's will and truth, his sinlessness, his works of mercy and power, his victory over demons, the purpose of his death. Most striking of all, Christ is not referred to as a saviour and nothing whatever is said about salvation. These omis-

- 
- (30) By the end of the century apostolic authority was assigned it, and until the 15th century it was believed that one of the twelve apostles was responsible each for one of its twelve clauses. The Creed of Nicea supplanted it as a Baptismal Formula during the 5th and 6th centuries. In the 8th century the enlarged Roman Symbol, our present Apostle's Creed came back into use, probably because of Frankish influence at Rome.





sions cannot be accounted for by the brevity of the Creed, for it is very detailed in what it says about Christ and even adds the seemingly insignificant word 'buried' to the words 'crucified under Pontius Pilate'. Certainly the Creed is very far from being a summary of the church's faith in the first or second or any other century." (31)

It is only on the hypothesis<sup>which</sup> McGiffert espouses that we can account for the omissions in the Symbol, its stress on minor points, and the fact that the church should choose this point in its history to draw up a FIXED rule of faith.

The case against McGiffert's interpretation is based in great measure upon a brief essay read by Karl Holl before the Berlin Academy of Sciences, entitled, "Concerning The Interpretation of the Second Article of the So-Called Apostles' Creed." (32)

Holl pointed out that there were two "ton's" in the second article of the Creed, and asked which of the christological statements that followed them

---

(31) MCGIFFERT p. 158.

(32) See MOEHLMAN p. 302-4.





had reference to Lord, and which to Son. (33) Further study by Leitzmann and Harnack, brought out the suggestion that the Creed was originally an expanded, three-article baptismal formula, to which had been added a longer christological confession, commonly used with the thanksgiving of the Lord's Supper, and originating in the KERYGMA or common preaching concerning Jesus Christ. Lietzmann listed examples of the existence of separate three-article, nine-member types of Apostles' Creed minus the christological confession, and others where the christological confession occurs after the second, or after the third article. (34)

---

(33) The point which he brought out was, why were there not seven "tons" instead of two? The Second Article read: "And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, WHO (ton) was born of holy Spirit and Mary the virgin, WHO (ton) was crucified....buried, rose....etc." Holl concluded that only "Son" was explained by "Mary the virgin" and that "our Lord" was explained by the long group of phrases beginning with the second "ton", that is, Crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, session and judgment. These six statements, so later investigations of Harnack and Lietzmann purported to show, were derived from christological confessions recited during the communion services; and were added later to the customary confession: "I believe in God, Father, Almighty, and in Christ Jesus his only Son, OUR LORD, and in holy Spirit, holy Church, resurrection of flesh."

(34) MOEHLMAN p. 305-11.



The conclusion drawn from the work of all three scholars is summarized by Moehlman: "the primary reason for the origin and growth of a Christian confession of faith was the spiritual need of the church, the need of magnifying the faith once for all delivered to the saints, the requirements of the liturgy. The secondary reason was polemical, opposition to heresy which demanded a more pronounced emphasis upon this or that word or the reconstruction of this or that clause." (35)

Thus, opposed to McGiffert's hypothesis--that the Creed was formulated in pointed phrase to exclude some(the Gnostics)-- is the other idealistic theory, that the Creed was formulated to advance religious life.

It is quite possible to admit the major part of the Holl-Lietzmann-Harnack-Moehlman thesis, and yet retain the essence of McGiffert's position. We can

---

(35) MOEHLMAN p. 319; see also LIETZMANN, Ch. 1v, especially p. 140, 148; HARNACK 2, entire, especially p. 71, 85.





grant that there were other, independent forms of the Symbol, (36) that it was an accident of Empire which perpetuated the version of the legal Latin mind, that most of the clauses had been in use before Marcion, and even that a christological confession, possibly taken from the eucharist service, was an integral part of the Symbol. In other words, we can admit that the religious need was the dynamic factor the Symbol was formed to serve, and still insist that it was the presence of Gnostic, particularly Marcionite, heresy which determined its formal content. The sum total of our discussion in this chapter has demonstrated how even the original clauses which were used in the construction of the Symbol, were called forth to stem error, while the arrangement of the Creed corresponds point for point with the objections Marcion raised to the orthodox position. Which all points to the conclusion that it was the emergency created by the rise of a strong Marcionitic church that made a fixed, apostolic Rule of Faith necessary.

The polemical nature of the Roman Symbol stands out clearly when we realize the strains which composed

---

(36) MOEHLMAN p. 318-19.





the Christianity from which it was constructed. (37)

From Judaism, it had inherited, among other things, a belief in a personal, righteous God; a strong ethical consciousness; a certain intransigence and tendency towards a martyr complex; a dream of universalism; the Old Testament; an apocalyptic note and the second coming; the custom of special feast days; certain attitudes to baptism and the eucharist; and concepts of righteousness, faith and justification. From the Hellenistic world it had gained an intellectual interpretation of religion; an emphasis on reason and knowledge; a dualistic world outlook; a concept of salvation as union with the divine spirit; a belief in immortality as one of the consequences of such union; the doctrine of the incarnation of a transcendent God of pure spirit in evil flesh; Greek philosophy; sacramental customs, and attitudes akin to those possessed by the mystery cults. From the early Christian movement itself, news of the salvation wrought by Jesus for all men; his conquest over sin and death; his oneness with God; and his Lordship over all the world. From Jesus it had learned

---

(37) Part of the outline which follows is from LATOURETTE I:301 ff.



of a God of love, of His Kingdom, of a life, death and resurrection which empowered men to higher living, and of concepts of mercy and love in the relationships of men to one another.

With this rich heritage to select from, as well as their own religious experience, the Christians at Rome entered into their Creed a few statements about God, about Jesus and about the Holy Spirit; statements the details of which are utterly incongruous with the space given them, when we think of the place they actually occupied in the Christian scheme. With the Creed of Nicea before us we cannot excuse them on the ground that Baptismal Formulas are necessarily small. No, Nicea was a philosophical conflict: hence, the Creed which resulted was a metaphysically-stated one. Marcionism was a very plain issue: and the Creed which answered it, did so directly. The Roman Symbol came from second century Christians living in the Rome of their day: any statement of faith they could produce almost had to be a protest against error. (38)

---

(38) As a matter of fact LIETZMANN seems at times to admit this, and to contradict his own argument: p. 72, "When this sort of thing happened (gnostic rise) the church was in very great danger, and was compelled to take effective measures of protection if her unity and





Now it is only when we have ~~reached~~ <sup>is seen</sup> the polemical nature of the Roman Symbol, that we can appreciate the Christianity which produced it. Much that was essential was omitted; (39) and much that was merely a matter of the moment was included. One would not learn from the Creed that there were many who had "salvation written on their hearts without paper or ink," (40) yet "even an open-eyed critic on the outside like Celsus....marked a specific devotion to Jesus Christ as human and divine that belonged to the central body of the faithful." (41)

Paradoxically enough, it was their attempt to preserve the assurance of God's presence with them that led the Christians to imprison their religion in the straight-jacket of the past. (42) Harnack once remarked

---

purity were not to fade into a mere ideal. The danger of dissolution....was never greater than in the second century, when wide areas of the Orient were under the influence of a gnosticism which was pressing forward victoriously. The church prepared a three-fold defense.... she....laid the foundations of theological teaching in the Creed...."; p. 124, 5. HARNACK III:20-38.

(39) See MCGIFFERT, op. cit. p. 158; cp. p. 16.

(40) IRENAEUS Bk. IV:2.

(41) MOFFATT 2 p. 70.

(42) IRENAEUS IV: "The truth is to be found nowhere else but in the Catholic church, the sole depository of apostolical doctrine."





that even creeds and dogmas could be made the vehicle of the gospel, provided they were not identified with it. This latter usually happens, and men like Luther who seek God, and the faith that he has found them, are given the dry husks of a revelation found in the records of a dead past; so that they often lose the power of finding it in a living present.

Thus the Apostles' Creed became the basis of faith. But it was a fragmentary basis; a basis which substituted for a personal confession of a spiritual experience, intellectual assent to a set of doctrinal and historical facts. The "First-Born Of Satan" was defeated, but Christianity moved farther away from the roots of authority which really nourished her. The "Good News Of The Kingdom" which had become the "Good News About Jesus", now became the "Good News About The Apostolic Faith" that had been given by God once for all to his saints. Creed was substituted for CREDO, and the result we know today in our own divided Christianity.

#### (iv) Resurrection of the Flesh

Consideration of the clause, "resurrection of flesh", in the Apostles' Creed, raises an interesting



question. Dean Inge <sup>notes</sup> ~~tells us~~ that Greek thought would have been horrified by the idea. (43) Paul avoids the statement that flesh ( *σὰρξ* ) is raised. He speaks of a spiritual body, a *σῶμα πνευματικόν*. (44)

Paul is intent on preserving the continuity of Christian personality after death, and says <sup>in effect</sup> that the spirit which dwells in all true believers must have some body ~~to inhabit~~ in the next world even as it has in this; only ~~there~~ it will be a heavenly body, a *σῶμα* more suited to its nature. What it will be like God alone knows, for it is wrought by God himself, a sheer wonder. (45)

Why then do we read "resurrection of the flesh" in the Creed? It is a case of environment at work again, shaping belief. Paul's theory of a spiritual resurrection (46) was heartily endorsed by the Gnostics and Marcionites, for they denied physical resurrection on the grounds that all flesh was evil. The fact that

(43) INGE, p. 21

(44) I COR. 15:37-44.

(45) MOFFATT 3, p. 257-262.

(46) Remember that Paul's idea was itself a compromise between Jewish and Greek beliefs: resurrection was not of the flesh alone, or of the spirit: but of the "spiritual body" (*σῶμα πνευματικόν*)





their enemies held the Pauline view so strongly, underlined its importance in the minds of the orthodox, who finally began to feel the need of opposing it. They also thought it tended to lead to immoral conduct among the converted. And finally, the ordinary person could not grasp Paul's subtlety: he knew what a physical body was, but a "spiritual body" sounded too much like a contradiction of terms.

The result was that *σὰρκα ἀνάστασιν* was added to the Creed as an emphatic refutation of Gnostic belief. (47) This anti-Pauline clause remained in the Creed, and was translated into English in 1557 in "The Institution of a Christian Man": "I believe that at doomsday all the people of the world that ever was or ever shall be unto that day shall then arise in the selfsame flesh and body which they had while they lived on earth." Six years later, in "A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man", the article reads simply, "the resurrection of the body." In this form it has, generally speaking, passed into use among English-speaking Christians. (48)

---

(47) McGIFFERT 2, p. 165-169

(48) Ibid. p. 169-170. However, the word "flesh" persists in the Prayer Book in the Baptismal Formula. (see p. 306, "The Book Of Common Prayer, Canada").





The ambiguity of the English "body" made it possible for them to render *σῶμα* and "carnis" that way. But they well knew that had the Greek intended "body", as distinct from "flesh", it too had a word for it: *κερῶν* (49) would have been as acceptable then as body is for us today. One is tempted to surmise that the real reason for the change was due to dislike in the minds of cultivated scholars for the crude article published in 1537. They would know the Pauline doctrine and would find it much more acceptable to their sixteenth century, sophisticated minds. The final chapter of the story has still to be written but what is happening in the Church of England today tends to bear out the suggestion which I have just ventured.

Our own mental climate is of course far more hostile to the notion of a bodily resurrection, much less a resurrection of the flesh, than that of the sixteenth century. I quote from two comments, one clerical, the other by a layman, on the report of the Church of England's recent Commission on Doctrine:

"It is a matter of thankfulness that the Commission has had the courage to recognize that some Church-

---

(49) McGIFFERT, p. 168. Or simply, ἀνάστασιν; or ἀνάστασιν κερῶν, ἢ κερῶν, or even ἀνάστασιν σώματος.



men--more perhaps, than is commonly supposed--can hold the doctrine of the Incarnation apart from belief in the Virgin Birth of our Lord and His physical Resurrection." (50)

"The virtual permission given by the Report, to accept or reject miracles is a landmark of Anglican theology, even though the chairman in his Introduction complains of the 'monotonous uniformity' of the world without them, which is hardly a convincing argument. Similar permission is indicated as regards the Virgin Birth and Our Lord's Bodily Resurrection. About the former, the argument of 'fittingness' is often used in support of the traditional view. It is too facile a method, for it could equally well be maintained that it would be more fitting were our Lord's an ordinary human birth. Similarly in support of the Bodily Resurrection we read on p. 87, 'To some of us it appears to be of vital importance that the supremacy of Spirit should be vindicated IN the material creation.....Here is the 'fittingness' argument again. Truth, however, should be based on evidence rather than on what almost amounts to taste.....

When it reaches the question of future resurrection of mankind the Commission affirms on p. 209 that, 'while we ought to reject quite frankly the literalistic belief in a future resuscitation of the actual physical frame which is laid in the tomb, in the life of the world to come the soul or spirit will still have its appropriate organ of expression and activity, which is one with the body of earthly life in the sense that it bears the same relation to the same spiritual entity.'

Here evidence is frankly unobtainable, so, as before, resort is had to 'fittingness'. How can such things be even guessed at?....." (51)

"Resurrection of the flesh" *is vanishing,*  
and the wind seems to be blowing in the same direction  
in respect to the Pauline theory of spiritual resuscitation.





The history of this clause from the oldest Creed is another illustration of the thesis that environment moulds the formal content of belief. Just as a set of second century prejudices, coupled with a heresy, forced "flesh" into the Creed; so a set of sixteenth century prejudices, coupled with a schism, permitted its modification to "body". And a twentieth century set of prejudices, combined with the need for church UNION, may even cause the Pauline belief to be dropped as an obligatory article of faith.





BIBLIOGRAPHY, CHAPTER III

1. BURKITT, F. C., "The Gospel History And Its Transmission", Edinburgh, T. Clark, 1906.
2. BUTTERTON, G. W., "Doctrine In The Church Of England; A Clerical Comment On The Commission's Report", HIBBERT JOURNAL, July 1938.
3. CARLYON, J. T., "The Impact Of Gnosticism On Early Christianity", an essay in "Environmental Factors in Christian History" (See Ch. II).
4. FISHER, G. P., "History Of Christian Doctrine" (See Ch. II)
5. HARNACK, A., "Outline Of The History Of Dogma" See Ch. II)
6. HARNACK, A., "History of Dogma" in 7 vols., Buchanan's translation, Williams and Korgate, London, 1896. \*
7. HARNACK, A., "The Apostles' Creed", Means' translation, London, Adam & Black, 1901.
8. INGE, W. R., "The Philosophy Of Plotinus", Vol. II, London; Longmans, Green & Co., 1929.
9. IRENAEUS, "Against Heresies", THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS, Vol. I, Roberts and Donaldson, Editors, Buffalo, Christian Lit. Pub. Co. 1885. \*
10. LIETZMANN, H. "The Founding Of The Church Universal" (See Ch. II) \*
11. LATOURETTE, K. S., "A History Of The Expansion Of Christianity", 3 vols. New York, Scribner's, 1937, '38, '39. \*
12. MCGIFFERT, A. C. "A History Of Christian Thought", Vol. I. (See Ch. II) \*
13. MCGIFFERT, A. C., "The Apostles' Creed", New York, Scribner's 1925. \*
14. MOFFATT, J., "The First Five Centuries Of The Church" (See Ch. II)



15. MOFFATT, J., "An Introduction To The Literature Of  
The New Testament" (See Ch. II)
16. MOFFATT, J., "First Epistle Of Paul To The Corin-  
thians", London, Hodder and Stoughton,  
1938, (The Moffatt N. T. Comm.) \*
17. MOZLEY, E. N., "Doctrine In The Church Of England:  
Lay Comments On The Commission's Re-  
port", HIBBERT JOURNAL, April 1938.
18. MOEHLMANN, C. H., "The Origin Of The Apostles' \*  
Creed", JOURNAL OF RELIGION, July 1933.
19. TERTULLIAN, "Against Marcion", THE ANTE-NICENE  
FATHERS, Vol. III. \*
20. TERTULLIAN, "The Prescription Against Heretics",  
THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS, Vol. III. \*
21. TERTULLIAN, "Against Praxeas", THE ANTE-NICENE  
FATHERS, Vol. III. \*
22. TERTULLIAN, "On The Veiling Of Virgins", THE ANTE-  
NICENE FATHERS, Vol. IV. \*
23. WALKER, W., "A History Of The Christian Church"  
(See Ch. II)



## CHAPTER IV

### CHURCH AND STATE

"The prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of exhortation into that of command. He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the church for his mother." (1) "For my part I should not believe the Gospels except as moved by the authority of the Church." (2)

"The Emperor had got what he asked, he had shown that he ruled the church, and he had got a formula (Chalcedon) by which he was able henceforth to decide what was orthodox and what was heretical." (3)

The discussion in this chapter deals with a new period in church history, the first period of imperialist Christianity, or Christian imperialism. Christianity has become a state religion and another form of authority has attached itself to it. We shall take a look at the chief factors operative in the formation of the Creed of Nicea, the break between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and the schism of the Coptic Church.

#### (1) CHRISTIANITY, A STATE RELIGION

The reign of Constantine is one of the great

---

(1) GIBBON, I:556 and CYPRIAN, p. 422

(2) AUGUSTINE, p. 112. (3) HARNACK, IV:221.





landmarks in the history of Europe, as well as of the Christian Church. (4) In the year 323, when he had established his rule over the whole empire, Constantine took further steps to forward a policy which was devised to hold together an uncertain and crumbling State. He moved his capitol to the Greek and Christian city which bears his name today. He centralized the administrative system and did away with the last vestiges of the ancient Republic. And he replaced a disintegrating state religion by the new and powerful Christianity which his predecessors had wasted so much energy in trying to exterminate. All three moves: the irreparable breach between East and West; the assumption of dictatorial powers; and the elevation of the Church to become a department of State left their mark on the doctrine and organization of the apostolic religion, and "helped to determine the kind of Christianity which spread." (5)

---

(4) FISHER, p. 98: "The whole course of European history would have been otherwise, had Constantine declined to accept Christianity as an authorized religion, or failed to summon the Council of Nicaea....."; see also RUSSELL, p. 107 ff.

(5) LATOURETTE, I:172-4, 356-62, p. 362: "Christianity.... thrust, still plastic, into the Mediterranean world, had been largely shaped by its environment. Some of the features then acquired persisted into succeeding ages and were accorded sanctity and regarded as norms....for better or for worse the Christianity of subsequent ages has borne the marks of the world and the cultures in which it was cradled."



From a persecuted sect Christianity became a State Church, with the resources and power of the Empire behind it. (6) The drawback, of course, was that the new religion of the Empire became the Empire's religion. For Constantine had adopted it, feeling that in it lay the force which could integrate his possessions; and he expected it to carry out that task. (7)

It inevitably happened that the will of the Emperor tended to become the will of the Church: "Whatever I will, be that esteemed a canon. Either obey or go into banishment." (8) After Constantine, especially, the imperial authority constantly interfered in ecclesiastical matters of every description. (9) The Emperor was, as a matter of fact, virtually head of the Church. (10) He called its Councils, created and proclaimed its Law in the interim periods when there were no Councils, and even appointed its chief bishops. (11) He enforced

(6) GIBBON, II:201, LATOURETTE: I:330-33.

(7) GIBBON, II:165, FISHER, 103.

(8) CONSTANTIUS in ATHANASIUS; see also WALKER, p. 111, MONTCREIF, p. 118, and AYER, p. 358.

(9) GIBBON, I:185.

(10) McKINNON, 549; SEIGNOBOS, 67; WALKER, 154 ff.

(11) BURY, p. 517-19; McKINNON, p. 549 ff.; FISHER, p.125-6.





unity, (12) exterminated opposition, (13) defined doctrine, (14) and in general laid a controlling hand upon the course of Christianity whenever it appeared to falter in the assigned it.

The result was that a despotic temper and an authoritarian form of government was implanted in the Church: "with the autocratic trend of the imperial rule, a religious intolerance arose which was much more unyielding than had been that of the Empire at its height." (15) The East-West split issued in the "ultimate bisection of Catholicism" (16); and religious controversy rapidly became the medium through which a host of nationalistic animosities were expressed. (17) In the West, the power of the Emperor gradually declined, and was re-

(12) LATOURETTE, I:172: "Christianity became a state religion....conversion for many was now a matter of policy...Of the several types of Christianity the state gave its support to one. After some vacillation it settled down to the endorsement of that which was recognized at Niceae as orthodox." See also MCKINNON, p. 546; SIGMUND, 66-7.

(13) Cf. the tolerant spirit, however forced, of the Edict of Galerius (GIBBON I:653) with the Codex Theodosianus: XVI:10, 14-16 and 21, 23 (AYER, p. 371-2). See also WALKER, p. 135.

(14) FISHER, p. 139; WALKER, p. 117, 127; MCGIFFERT p.261

(15) LATOURETTE I:184, see also WELLS, n.553, MCKINNON, 566

(16) See HARNACK, III: 12; MOFFATT, p. 145.

(17) HARNACK, p. 196: "The forces which from 444 onwards





placed by the sovereignty of the bishop of Rome, who continued for centuries to exercise both temporal and spiritual authority over the subjects under his sway.

The Christianity of Jesus, the good news preached by his disciples, the apostolic faith, all were enshrined in an authoritarian state system that dealt intolerantly with any attempt to question its privileged position from that time forward. It was not until 1787 that any state was to insist upon complete religious toleration and the impartial treatment of all Christian groups under its flag.

#### (11) THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

No sooner had Constantine acted on the idea that Christianity could be an ally in his struggle for empire unity than wide-spread division broke out within the church itself. There had been heresy and dispute in the past but the presence of persecution had forced the Christians to keep the peace among themselves. Unity in diversity sums up the ante-Constantinian position of Christianity: up to that time the church as

---

determined the great decisions (re dogma) and actions were throughout political." See also BURY op. cit., MOFFATT p. 187, WALKER, p. 147, 157.



such possessed no clear cut system of doctrine save the rules of Faith of her leading dioceses. Indeed the sharp conflict waged with Judaism and Gnosticism had produced a variety of defences of the orthodox position; and these now became the subject of dissension.

Arianism, as the conflict which led to the Council of Nicaea, was called, was essentially a question for the Eastern church. The more practical West was content with the Roman Symbol as a norm of Doctrine; but the East, intellectual, and of a speculative turn, could not refrain from philosophic speculation on the mysteries of the Christian religion. (18) The quarrel originated in a difference between the bishop of Alexandria and Arius, one of his presbyters, over the nature of Christ's relationship to God. Gibbon has very properly remarked that it "derived from the abuses of philosophy," (19) since it was confusion between Adoptionist and Logos Christologies that issued in the abstract metaphysical discussions which took place at Nicaea.

---

(18) CURTIS, p. 65: "The protagonists in the Arian conflict were Greek-speaking theologians, mainly from the speculative schools of Alexandria and Caesarea. Of the bishops who assembled at the imperial summons, the vast majority were from Eastern sees.

(19) GIBBON, II:206





The problem the philosophers faced, was whether or not the pre-existent Son Of God (the Logos), incarnate in Jesus Christ, possessed the full deity of God. (20) Origen, the great Platonic theologian of Alexandria had taught the eternal generation of the Son, but a Son subordinate to the Father. (21) Lucian of Antioch had emphasized the unity and self-contained existence of God (22) (which he had learned from Paul of Samosta and Aristotle (23) ) and taught that Christ was a creature, "a heavenly being who was created by God out of nothing." (24)

Arius and Alexander, his bishop, came into conflict when the former preached the doctrines of Lucian in the latter's church. Alexander, emphasizing one side of Origen's teaching, argued the essential one-ness of

---

(20) McGIFFERT, p. 246f.

(21) WALKER, p. 81: "His generation is as eternal and everlasting as the brilliancy which is produced from the sun (DE PRINCIPIIS I:2:4)". Yet Christ is "a second God." (CELSUS 5:39) See also ADENEY, p. 431.

(22) WALKER, p. 114

(23) McKINNON, p. 556

(24) McKINNON, p. 555, McGIFFERT, op. cit., HARNACK IV:6: "In Lucian's teaching Adoptionism is combined with the doctrine of the Logos as a creature, and this form of doctrine is developed by the aid of Aristotelian philosophy and based on the critical exegesis of the Bible."





Christ with God, "begotten not out of that which is not, but of the Father, who is;----the Son is immutable, perfect like the Father,.....the Son always existed of the Father." (25) Arius replied that Alexander was teaching the "unbegotten begotten". And that he himself taught and believed "the Son was not begotten, nor in any way part of the Unbegotten.....before He was begotten....or created, or purposed or established He was not. We are persecuted because we say that the Son has a beginning, but that God is without beginning." (26)

In the year 321-22 Arius was condemned by a synod which Alexander had summoned to meet in Alexandria. Afterwards both he and Arius wrote to the rest of the ecclesiastical world in support of their separate attitudes, thus precipitating controversy on a large scale. "Disputes and contentions arose in every city and in every village concerning theological dogmas..... These were indeed scenes fit for the tragic stage, over which tears might have been shed. For it was not, as in bygone days, when the church was attacked by strangers and enemies; but now nations of the same country, who dwelt

---

(25) AYER, p. 301, (From a letter by Alexander in THEODORET, Hist. Ec. 1,3)

(26) AYER, p. 302, (From a letter by Arius in THEODORET, Hist. Ec., 1,4).



under one roof and sat down at one table, fought against each other, not with spears, but with their tongues." (27)

This was the situation when Constantine turned to the church fresh from his victory over Licinius. Not unnaturally he was quite irritated by what seemed to be a petty squabble in the institution whose unity he had just decided was to be one of the main supports of empire stability. After discovering by letter that the Alexandrian disputants would not agree to differ, (28) he cast about for a means of establishing some norm of belief which he could use to enforce uniformity. (29) Some years earlier he had attempted to solve the Donatist schism by means of a Church Council; and, acting on that precedent and the advice of his Spanish bishop, Hosius of Cordova, he ordered an assembling of a council of the whole church, the first Ecumenical Council, for the purpose of defining the content of orthodoxy. (30)

(27) THEODORET, Hist. Ec. 1, 5 (in MCKINNON 557)

(28) HEFELE, p. 260, HARNACK, IV:11f.

(29) MCKINNON, p. 554, CASE, p. 125-7, JONES, p. 94, CURTIS, p. 66.

(30) HEFELE, p. 281: note the manner in which he addresses them at the opening meeting: "I consider disunion in the Church an evil more terrible and more grievous than any kind of war.....When I was told of the division that had arisen among you....I convened you without delay. But I shall not believe my end to be attained until I have united the minds of all..." (EUSEBIUS: Vita Const 111:12)





The Council met in 325, and its deliberations resulted in a complete victory for Athanasius, deacon in the church at Alexandria, soon to be the successor of Alexander, and now the chief antagonist of Arius. The Creed of Nicaea is thus another ecumenical statement, to be compared with those we have already spoken of:

"We believe in one God, Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of His Father, only begotten, that is of the OUSIA of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made, of one substance (Homoousios) with the Father, by whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things in earth, who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was made flesh and was made (became) man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into the heavens and comes to judge living and dead."

But those who say there was when He was not, and before being begotten He was not, and He was made out of things that were not or those who say that the Son of God was from a different substance (hypostasis) or being (ousia) or a creature, or capable of change or alteration, these the Catholic Church anathematizes." (31)

As distinct from the Apostles' Creed this Creed begins in the first person plural: it is a step removed from a personal confession. The anathematizing clauses make perfectly clear that the Arians were to be eliminated; they were dropped later, but the damage had been done. However

---

(31) AYER, p. 306  
HARNACK, IV:50.



necessary the step had been the essence of Christianity was, at Nicaea, expressed in the categories of a philosophy which we have long outlived, and from which it has never really been released.

The "HOMOOUSIOS" phrase, soon to become the battle cry of the Athanasians, was inserted into the Creed at the behest of the Emperor, according to Walker. (32) It was backed by Hosius from the West, and by Alexandria and others from the East, (33) and to the Emperor, who wanted the impractical mystery settled immediately, it looked like as substantial a basis of unity as could be secured from those at the Council. The majority, who were not quite sure what to think, and the remainder, save two, yielded to the imperial persuasion: "The Athanasian party had triumphed owing to the pressure of its imperial patron in its support and the pliability of its opponents. With it, too, had triumphed the spirit of intolerance in theological discussion and the principle of inflicting and enforcing, by the State, civil penalties for theological opinion." (34)

---

(32) WALKER, p. 117; also see BURN, p. 239; HARNACK IV:50.

(33) AYER, p. 300.

(34) McKINNON, p. 566, see also 563-5; FISHER, p. 139, McGIFFERT, p. 266; HARNACK IV:56; HEFELE, p. 289, 292; CURTIS, p. 66; CASE, p. 127.





One of the results of the Emperor's presence was the exaggeration of the importance of the Council's findings: the absolute authority of the Emperor was transferred to the Creed. (35)

After reading the literature about the Nicene struggle one's first impulse is to dismiss it as a petty squabble over words. It was much more than that. The words, heavy and inexcusably metaphysical--when we think of the average church member for whom they were ostensibly intended--were, it is true, drawn from the substance philosophy of the time:

"If the Stoic metaphysics had been dominant instead of the Platonic, and the immanence of God, or the oneness of divine and human nature, had been recognized by the Nicene theologians, the doctrine of the Trinity would have been unnecessary; the religious interest--to find God in Christ--could then have been conserved without distinguishing the pre-existent Son of God from the Father." (36)

The authoritative form in which the Creed was drawn up

---

(35) SEIGNOBOS, p. 66 f.: "Constantine forced the assembly to formulate a confession of faith, the Nicene Creed, which should be binding upon all Christians, thus formulating as a rule of absolute law religious opinions which had remained controversial. He imposed upon the heads of the Christian Church an authoritative discipline which prepared the way for an obligatory unit of belief in Europe." RICHARDSON, 52-5.

(36) McGIFFERT, p. 275.





was due to imperial influence and political necessity.

"The Church had become an official institution of the Empire; it was not the spontaneous conviction of Christians which had secured the absolute unity of doctrine within the church, but the material powers of the Emperor."  
(37)

But still the driving force which had produced the controversy was religious. Arius was a logic-chopper whose chief concern was for a consistent monotheism. (38) "One has absolutely nowhere the impression that he and his friends are in their theology concerned with communion with God," (39) He held that Jesus was neither God, for there was only one God, nor man, for Christ had been preexistent. Athanasius, on the other hand, was primarily interested in preserving the reality of religious faith and salvation. (40) He was true to the spirit of his time and place in demanding that there be a real bridge between the finite and the infinite. To the Greek mind God was in his heaven, man was on earth, and only actual contact with divinity could assure men of redemp-

---

(37) SEIGNOBOS, p. 67; (38) AYER, p. 299; (39) HARNACK IV:42.

(40) For the two positions see AYER, p. 297-306; see also ADENEY, p. 43-5, HARNACK IV:p.2-59, HEFELE, p. 231-261, McGIFFERT, Ch. 13, and RICHARDSON, p. 43-55, for outline of them.



tion. Salvation could only be the work of God, not of any creature of God, and Athanasius "knew" from experience that Jesus must be as divine as God and as human as man. He "knew" that God was not wholly unknown but had taken action in history, in Jesus, to bring men into fellowship with him. (41) And he saw clearly that the Jesus of Arius' description had neither attained to God in the manner of the Adoptionists, nor was he one with God as the Logos Christologists affirmed. "Arius' teaching therefore, was so dangerous, that it undermined the whole possibility of salvation." (42)

Once again we see the problem emerge: how are men to be sure of a gracious God? Athanasius had known God in Jesus and the only way he could rationalize his experience was in terms of a substance philosophy which was not capable of grasping the distinctions he sought to express. Logically, there is no actual referent in the world for the Being which the Nicene Creed describes, but Athanasius put up with the absurdity of this formu-

---

(39 Cont'd) As unbiased a mind as one could wish for, in this matter, the great Unitarian, Dr. James Martineau, once said: "If I had lived when Athanasius contested the teaching of Arius, I should have been on the side of Athanasius, because Arius robs humanity of the inspiration which comes from the example of the man Christ Jesus, living a perfect life through the indwelling of the Divine." (Quoted by LUNN, p. 407); Harnack and Carlyle both credited Athanasius with saving Christianity from extinction.

(41) KRUGER, p. 825; (42) COLLINS, p. 66.





lation, and also sacrificed the historical Christ, to save "the religious conviction that Christianity is the religion of perfect fellowship with God." (43) "It was no small achievement to get the matter settled once for all that even if God be nowhere else present in person in this world, He was at least substantially present in Christ." (44)

To recapitulate: the religious motive, a passion for salvation, produced the Arian controversy; an ideological climate gave the Creed its abstruse terminology; and political pressure forced the disputants to come together, to agree on a compromise formulation, and to invest their statement of agreement with absolute authority.

It is not necessary here to give an extensive account of the sequel. As we would expect the decision settled very little, and Constantine's hope for a united church was doomed from the start. As soon as the Council broke up the majority, who had gone away dissatisfied, gathered around their respective champions and conflicts began which took centuries to settle. Gibbon

---

(43) HARNACK, p. 49.

(44) JONES, p. 103.



quotes Hilary of Poitiers:

"It is a thing equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are as many creeds as opinions among men, as many doctrines as inclinations.....the Homousion is rejected and received and explained away by successive synods.....Every year, nay, every noon we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries.....We condemn either the doctrine of others in ourselves, or our own in that of others...." (45)

Soon there were at least three varieties of Arians, and the Emperors themselves varied in their allegiance between the squabbling parties.

In the midst of it all Athanasius remained the indomitable champion of Nicene orthodoxy. Frequently Arianism was dominant and he found himself opposed to the imperial throne. It is said that he was the one Christian who "consistently resisted the control of the church by the head of the state." (46) He was expelled from his bishopric five times, and spent nearly twenty years as an exile or fugitive; (47) his life is a living witness to the futility of attempting to force ideas upon men instead of securing their acceptance.

---

(45) GIBBON IV:223 (from SOCRATES, I:23)

(46) CASE, p. 131.

(47) GIBBON IV:235, remarks his character superior to emperors; ENCYCLOPEDIA BRIT. on "Athanasius"; see also McGIFFERT, p. 266-7.



In 381 a last attempt to secure a union of the Arians and the orthodox was made at a Council held in Constantinople. From that time the orthodox State Church was established, laws against heresy were passed such as those referred to on page three, and Arianism gradually melted away, its last refuge being among the Germanic peoples. The controversy over the nature of Christ was not settled until the Council of Chalcedon of which we shall speak shortly.

Throughout, the influence of the Emperor was predominant. As Richards says, "heresy was an old tale; but for an Emperor to give a dinner to Christians, instead of providing lions with a Christian dinner, was an astounding and unprecedented phenomenon." (48) Overawed by the imperial splendour they did as he wished, with the result that in spite of the sincerity of Athanasius, dogma and theological catch-words were substituted for practical religion; an authoritative system for the dispensation of grace replaced a vital personal faith, and the historical approach to the reality of Jesus was sacrificed to metaphysical, sub-scientific statements about it. I think we can agree with McKinnon's sharp judgment of the Council of Nicaea:

---

(48) RICHARDSON, p. 53.





"to transform a questionable speculation into an essential dogma and demand its acceptance as a cardinal article of faith, under penalty of excommunication, deprivation and banishment, was, to say the least, a very unreasonable procedure. It was, besides, a gross infraction of the liberty of Christian thought in purely speculative questions." (49)

The good news of God's Kingdom had become an abstract statement about his nature.

### (iii) THE COPTIC CHURCH

We noticed that the Council of Nicaea did not settle finally the problem of the relation of Jesus to God; it did postulate his deity. What remained, if Athanasius' theory of redemption was to be retained, was to demonstrate that Jesus was also fully human. It is in controversies over the human and divine natures in Jesus that the Coptic schism originated.

The Coptic church is the Egyptian national church. (50) We know very little of its beginnings; but from the start there evidently were two groups, the educated products of Hellenistic culture, and the na-

---

(49) McKIMMON, p. 562.

(50) For outlines of the rise of the Coptic church see ADENEY, p. 553-64, SCOTT-MONTCRIEFF, p. 113ff.



tives who spoke their own language and among whom elements of the ancient Egyptian religion still flourished.

The former, centred in Alexandria, numbered famous theologians among its ranks and was characterized by an intellectual approach to Christianity. This limited its influence to the upper classes. The latter, the masses, responded to what they could understand of the new religion; largely to the stories in the bible, the martyrdom of the saints, and to the ascetic side of Christianity.

The latter type of response led to the founding of the hermit movement, the literal practice of asceticism represented in history by St. Anthony. And from it spread that monasticism which was to inundate the whole of European Christendom in succeeding centuries. It was among these hermits that Athanasius found frequent refuge during his years of exile from Alexandria.

The hermit movement grew, becoming increasingly powerful, fanatical and nationalistic, especially after Constantine came to the throne and made Christianity the state religion. For to them empire Christianity meant the domination of Greece over Egypt; it meant the rule of the cultured aristocrats of the church at Alex-





andria; and it meant numberless theological controversies like the Arian dispute. The Copts, as the natives came to be called, were not metaphysicians and failed completely to grasp the concept of a God, or a Christ, as two natures which were yet one.

Their cry was "One Nature!"; and they championed the monophysite theory advocated by Cyril, bishop of Alexandria. (51) Cyril had gained the support of the Egyptian masses and had succeeded by not very commendable means in defeating his arch-enemy Nestorius of Constantinople at a Council in 431 on the question of the two natures. (52)

The christological quarrels of this pre-Chalcedonian period were essentially political. (53) The bishops of Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome engaged in a three-way struggle for supremacy, not merely for spiritual supremacy but for what that stood for, political hegemony in the areas contested. "Few passages in

---

(51) HARNACK, VI: 174-9, 209; "the one incarnate nature of the God-logos"; McGIFFERT, p. 281, "Christ could be said to be from two natures but not in two natures for he had only one divine-human nature, humanity and divinity in him being wholly merged."

(52) McGIFFERT, p. 282, "The Nestorian controversy was embittered by the traditional rivalry between the bishops of Alexandria and Constantinople.....the quarrel between Nestorius and Cyril....was political as well as theological".

(53) HARNACK VI:196, McGIFFERT, p. 287, BURY, p. 518, WALKER, p. 147.



the history of the Church are more painful." (54) The Council of Ephesus (449) was manipulated by the Coptic-supported and nationalistic bishop of Alexandria, Dioscurus, to win him victory over both Rome and Constantinople. He had, in fact, gained the emperor's support to secure the endorsement of the monophysite position of the anti-Nestorian controversialist and follower of Cyril, Eutyches. (55)

This was a resounding triumph for Dioscurus and his fanatical Egyptian followers (4). Leo of Rome saw at once that he had underestimated the power of Dioscurus in helping him to defeat Constantinople, and resolved to assert the priority of his own see immediately. The opportunity came with the death of the Emperor (450), and the accession of Pulcheria and Marcian to the throne. "The Alexandrian bishop was on the point of becoming master of Egypt and at the same time master of the East.... for Empire and Emperor had come to be entirely dependent on the Church which culminated in the Alexandrian chair and its monks. Pope and Emperor therefore made common

---

(54) AYER, p. 511ff.

(55) AYER, p. 514, "Eutyches said: I confess that our Lord was of two natures before the union (i.e. the union of divinity and humanity in the incarnation), but after the union one nature....."





cause....in the years 450-1." (56) Leo and the Court between them secured the condemnation of both Nestorius and Eutyches at the Council of Chalcedon which met in 451, and the banishment of the later along with Dioscurus.

Monophysitism was condemned, the authority of the Emperor reasserted, and the equality of Rome with Constantinople fixed. (57) The Creed, "drawn up after imperial pressure had been exerted", (58) was based largely on a famous letter written by Leo to Flavian of Constantinople, and known as Leo's Tome. (59) It marks the culmination of christological debate and the first outstanding victory of Latin theology in the Councils. From this time forth the standards of orthodoxy remain fixed:

"The Chalcedonian Symbol is preceded by a reaffirmation of the Creeds of the 318 and 150 holy Fathers, which would have sufficed but for the emergence of new errors of Apollinaris, Nestorius, and Eutyches, and is followed by a solemn anathema against any other creed for the use of converts. It runs as follows:

---

(56) HARNACK VI:193, (57) AYER, p. 521,

(58) WALKER, p. 151, see Harnack as quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

(59) ADENEY, p. 232, "Leo's Tome determined the decision of Chalcedon.", and AYER p. 514, "when the letter....was read at Chalcedon, the Fathers of the Council cried out: 'Peter has spoken by the mouth of Leo.'"





1. We then following the Holy Fathers all with one consent teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood;
2. true God and at the same time truly man of a reasonable soul and body;
3. consubstantial with the Father according to His godhead, and consubstantial with us according to His manhood, in all things like unto us apart from sin;
4. begotten both before all worlds of the Father according to his godhead, and also in these latter days, on account of us and our salvation, of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to his manhood;
5. one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, separation;
6. the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one person and one substance, not parted or divided into two persons but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ;
7. according as the Prophets from the beginning have spoken concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the creed of the Holy Fathers has handed down to us." (60)

But again an imperial attempt at coercion proved a boom-crang. "The interest underlying the symbol was more ethical than redemptive,--the interest of Leo, and of the western church generally." (61) The greater percentage of the Egyptians simply refused to support the findings

---

(60) CURTIS, p. 77ff.

(61) McGIFFERT, p. 286.



of Chalcedon, and the deposition of Dioscurus proved to be the direct cause for the final severance of the Coptic Church. (62) The following century witnessed unprecedented riots and quarrels between Egyptian state-church Patriarchs or Melchites, and the powerful and fanatical Monophysites supported by the masses of the people and the monks. (63)

All attempts at reconciliation failed (64) because the division was too fundamental, Copt against Greek, Nationalist against Imperialist and Monophysite against Melchite: "the reviving sense of Nationalism (anti-Greek) in Syria and Egypt found expression in the 5th century in passionate monophysitism: theology was the only sphere in which such feelings could be uttered." (65) It was these fierce antagonisms which

---

(62) ADENEY, p. 565 (63) HARNACK VI:226 (64) LATOURETTE, II:231

(65) BURY, p. 518, 516; LATOURETTE II:436: "So long as the Empire remained strong the state was usually able to maintain a semblance of ecclesiastical cohesion. When, however, the domains of the Emperors who inherited the Roman name shrank, the various regional churches broke apart, Monophysitism became the slogan for the tearing away from the fellowship of the Greek section of the Church the majority of Christians of Syria and Egypt." See also WALKER, p. 157, and ADENEY, p. 566.





smoothed the way for an easy Mohammedan conquest of Egypt some years later.

The church in Egypt is to this day overwhelmingly Coptic and monophysite in its composition. An interesting illustration of the tenacity which political and racial differences exhibit, in their influence on religious belief, is given by Pierre van Paasen who made some inquiries of the hierarchy of that "most conspicuous daughter of the Coptic Church", (66) the Abyssinian, just prior to the recent war between Italy and Ethiopia. The Abyssinian church, incidentally, was founded probably by persons exiled from the Roman empire for religious reasons, and has parried several attempts by other branches of Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic, to conquer it. (67)

In his DAYS OF OUR YEARS van Paasen relates that the Abuna, the head of the Coptic Church, "entertained the naive notion that world Protestantism would not permit the conquest of Ethiopia by a Catholic power." (68) The Abuna suspected that the Roman Catholic Church had been granted a free hand in Abyssinia by Mussolini in

---

(66) WALKER, p. 158      (67) LATOURETTE I:236-7, II:234-5, III:46, 79-80.

(68) van PAASEN, p. 308.



return for support of the war:

"He did not think far amiss: .....within six months after Graziani's triumphant entry into Addis Ababa, shiploads of Sicilian and Maltese monks were on their way to Ethiopia to 'evangelize' the Coptic Christians of Tigre and the Amharic plateau. The new "Italia in Africa" was divided into five ecclesiastical provinces with a papal prefect at their head, and the Pope even went so far as to recall the French Catholic missions who had worked in Ethiopia for three-quarters of a century.....In 1937, moreover, the Abuna of the Coptic Church was arrested, shipped to Italy and incarcerated in the prison of Venice." (69)

Speaking of a conversation on theology which he had had with the Abuna and Ras Mala Guetta the War Minister, van Paasen continues:

"I think that their anger was most aroused by the thought that after all these centuries the Bishop of Rome, the title they used in speaking of the Pope, was going to impose his views. For the Abuna blandly interpreted the coming war with Italy as a resumption of the long battle between Rome and the Eastern schismatics. He did not blame Rome for using Mussolini's sword to put an end to an old controversy, for he saw nothing incongruous in that fact. The Ethiopian emperors had employed similar methods in converting different black tribes to their own particular brand of Christianity." (70)

Looking back from the vantage point of the twentieth century it is possible to see how political struggles and racial antipathies determined the formal content of the religious creeds of the Copts. But for the attempts of



the Emperors to enforce uniformity the schism might not have taken place at all.

(iv) THE GREAT SCHISM

The secession of the monophysites to become permanent national churches was accompanied by a widening of the breach between Eastern and Western churches which we noticed began in the time of Constantine. Today the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church mirror in their names certain of the reasons for their permanent estrangement. The East was Greek, absorbed with metaphysics, and interested in a redemptive theory of salvation. A short survey follows of how the schism developed; the history of it is conveniently separated into two periods, the one a time of growing separation from the 5th to the 11th centuries, and the other a series of abortive attempts at reunion which have taken place since. (71)

There are four main causes for the split: difference of race, separation of the two empires, rivalry of Patriarchs, and the 'filioque' clause. (72)

With regard to the first cause, the racial,

---

(71) O.E.C. p. 334(b)

(72) ADENEY, Ch. VI.





Gibbon writes that the "aversion of the Greeks for the Latins has been often visible and conspicuous" throughout history. (73) He attributes it to the resentment which the Greeks cherished against the Latins because of the latter's increasing power in empire and church which they, the cultured and learned and civilized, had founded. The Latins, on their side, despised the hair-splitting disputations of the Greeks. (74) In addition, the Greeks were fast becoming an oriental race, for the strongest rulers of the late Roman empire were from Asia Minor. (75) The Romans had been invigorated by Germanic and Gothic blood. And these two facts served to increase their already plentiful natural differences.

Further, the rationalist temper of the Greek mind vanished rapidly in the West in the face of the imperious need of taming the barbarian; this task placed all the more emphasis on the development of the legalistic turn of mind of the Latins. The Greek language

---

(73) GIBBON, V:118,

(74) O.E.C., p. 334(b), "The theological genius of the East was different from that of the West. The Eastern theology had its roots in Greek philosophy, while a great deal of Western theology was based on Roman law. The Greek fathers succeeded the sophists, the Latin theologians succeeded the Roman advocates."

(75) ADENEY, p. 231.



also suffered, for it was dropped sometime in the 3rd century from the church services of Roman Christians. "The effective unity of the Christian Church was broken on the rock of vocabulary and syntax. Greek Christianity in a climate of Greek metaphysics and imperial despotism took one course. Latin Christianity, in an undisciplined and barbaric world, but using the language and sharing the spirit of Roman law, took another. In the east the church was subject to the state; in the west under the leadership of the Bishop of Rome, it made pretensions to be an independent, if not a superior authority." (76) Immersed in her practical problems Rome gradually had less and less to do with the Byzantine church, and the Roman and Greek attitudes to Christianity became separate and antagonistic forces.

The separation of eastern and western empires was another factor which operated to make the two churches strangers to one another. As Fisher says, (supra) the Byzantine church soon became a department of the new Constantinopolitan state. The power of the emperor in the west gradually declined, and the Roman church grew rapidly into a first class political power, in the

---

(76) FISHER, p. 105





early years the one bulwark they possessed against the barbarians. (77)

Leo the Great had maintained the priority of Rome over the other churches, (78) and as early as 495 we find a Roman bishop writing to an emperor in terms the eastern patriarch would never have dared using: "there are two powers, august Emperor, by which the world is chiefly ruled, namely the sacred authority of the priests and the royal power. Of these, that of the priests is the more weighty, since they have to render an account for even the kings of men in the divine judgment." (79) The final break with the East occurred in the year 800 when Pope Leo III cast his lot in with the new Frankish kingdom thus definitely passing out of even the nominal control of the Roman emperor. (80) To the

---

(77) COLLINS, p. 103 ff., FISHER, p. 104 ff., ROBINSON, Ch. III, "Gradually the Church began to undertake the duties which the Roman government had previously performed and which our governments perform to-day.....the popes became in many respects more powerful than any of the kings or princes with whom they frequently found themselves in bitter conflict." (p. 45-6).

(78) ROBINSON, II, p. 72, (79) IBID, p. 72-3 (from a letter by Pope Gelasius I to Emperor Anastasius).

(80) BURY, p. 518(a), ROBINSON, p. 134: "....the king went to mass in St. Peter's, and as he knelt in prayer before the altar Pope Leo set a crown upon his head, while all the Roman populace cried aloud: 'Long life and victory to the mighty Charles, the great and pacific Emperor of the Romans, crowned of God.' .....the pope did homage to him,



people of the West the coronation of Charlemagne was the restoration of their empire which had been held for centuries by a ruler in remote Constantinople. (81)

These two forces in themselves would have been sufficient to produce a schism, but to the cultural and geographic differences was added the struggle for supremacy between the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople. It has been noted that Leo's triumph at Chalcedon alienated Egypt and Syria; Canon 28 of that Council had granted Constantinople equal standing with Rome, but neither Leo nor his successors ever accepted it. Leo wrote the Emperor against it in 452: "There can be no sure building save on that rock which the Lord laid as foundation.... Let it be enough for the aforesaid (Anatolius, bishop of Constantinople) that by the aid of your piety and by my favorable assent he has obtained the bishopric of so great a city." (82) Twenty years later, Gelasius claimed authority over both Emperor and Patriarch; his predecessor, Felix III, had actually excommunicated Acacius because of his tendency towards monophysitism and in 519 the papacy had emerged triumphant

---

(80 Cont'd) as had been the custom with early rulers, and henceforth he dropped the title of Patrician and was called Emperor and Augustus...."

(81) WALKER, p. 206.

(82) AYER, p. 478.





from the struggle. (83) About 847-852 the famous forgery, the "Donation of Constantine" appeared, granting the Pope supreme jurisdiction and providing the papacy with a mighty weapon with which to attempt to realize the ideals of Augustine's CITY OF GOD, the ideal of a church supreme both temporally and spiritually.

Rivalry led to open rupture during the struggle which was waged over the right of the scholarly Photius to retain his patriarchal chair in Constantinople after the Pope had ordered him deposed. (84) "Photius stood out as the champion of the Greeks against the claim of the Roman see, and his patriarchate marks the emancipation of the Greeks from the spiritual leadership of Rome." (85) Rome refused to yield the point of supremacy, and Constantinople held as tenaciously to its hostile national attitude. The Pope then deposed Photius, and Photius at a synod in 867 condemned the Pope, accusing the Western church of heresy for admitting the filioque clause to the creed. (86) The feud continued until a complete severance resulted in 1054 when Leo IX

---

(83) WALKER, p. 135.

(84) ADERLEY, p. 236.

(85) WIDV n. 510(2)

(86) WALKER n. 213





excommunicated the whole Eastern church because they had accused the Latins of the same heresy which Photius had claimed they were guilty of, and had gone the length of closing the Latin churches in Constantinople on that ground. (87)

The ostensible cause for the break was the filioque clause, and with it comes the last of the reasons for the bisection of the Catholic church. The filioque clause was first inserted into the Nicene Creed at the Council of Toledo in 589 when the trinitarian faith was accepted by the ruling classes of Spain. At the Council of Arles (813) the double procession, as it is called, was formally sanctioned. Although it occurs before his time the responsibility for its occurrence can probably be laid at the door of Augustine who was anxious in his theology to preserve the absolute equality of Father and Son. (88) Eastern traces of subordinationism, and their feeling that the Father is the sole source of all made this arbitrary Western addition to a venerated creed a source of deep resentment; it became the chief ground of difference between East and West, and remains so today, each church anathematizing the other because of this fine

---

(87) WALKER, p. 224, ADENEY, p. 240, O.E.C., p. 334, GIBBON, p. 121-22.

(88) AUGUSTINE, p. 216, "the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son also."



point of doctrine. "The clause in the Latin version asserting the procession of the Holy Spirit originally ran: "QUI EX PATRE PROCEDIT." The Roman church now renders this clause: "QUI EX PATRE FILIOQUE PROCEDIT." (89)

From this time (1034) the two churches remain apart: "subsequent plans of reunion were entertained by the Emperors merely for political reasons, to obtain Western support against their foes, or to avert (through papal influence) the aggressive designs of Western princes." (90)

The Crusades proved an exacerbating factor, in spite of the fact that one of the goals which the Popes had in mind when they were launched was the reunion of East and West. (91) The behaviour of the rude Norman crusaders, and the horror of the Fourth Crusade when Constantinople itself was plundered (1204) and the Greek church rendered subject to the Pope, augmented the hate between the two churches. (92)

---

(89) ADENBY, p. 238; for accounts of the filioque clause see IBID, p. 237-240; FISHER 146-7; CURTIS, p. 73-4; HARNACK IV:126-37.

(90) BURY, p. 519(a)

(91) GIBBON, V:122.

(92) WALKER, p. 233ff.; O.E.C., p. 334-5; SPINKA, p. 272, 269 and 271: "Pope Innocent III desired to utilize the conquest of Byzantium for the realization of the age-long dream of reunion of the churches. With that aim in mind,





As Bury has suggested, other attempts at reunion were hollow failures which always wrecked on the points of papal supremacy. (93) A glimpse of what happened in the 15th century at the Council of Florence when the last attempt at reunion took place will lay bare the issues involved in any project for reunion, and form a fitting conclusion to our survey of the great schism. The Greek emperor was in fear of the Turks and was willing to submit to the terms of Rome in return for military support for Constantinople. The following extracts from Flick are very illuminating:

"The Emperor had arrived three days earlier (1437), was embraced by the Pope in the courtyard of his palace, was requested not to kneel, but was permitted to kiss the Pontiff's hand, and then was given a seat on the Pope's left for a friendly visit. The Patriarch, on the contrary, was requested to kiss the Pope's foot on his arrival, but he stubbornly refused to do it, saying, 'If the Pope be the suc-

---

(92 Cont'd) he sent Cardinal Benedict of St. Susanna to Roumania and Nicaea to win the Greeks for union on a dogmatic basis. The Cardinal labored for two years (1205-7), but in vain. A dogmatic union proved an impossible goal.... In 1203 Pope Innocent III sent Cardinal Pelagius of Albano to secure the submission of the Greek clergy in Roumania and to win the hierarchs of Nicaea for union.....His tyranny drove the Greeks to appeal to Henry (Emperor). They professed their loyalty to him in civil matters: 'We who are of another race, and have a pontiff of our own, have submitted to your rule with our bodies, but not with our souls and spirits. We cannot repudiate our rites and ceremonies.....Henry freed (them)."

(93) See O.E.C., p. 335 for negotiations of 1227-41 and 1274.



cessor of Peter, we are the successors of other apostles. Did they kiss Peter's foot?' and he threatened to return home. After a day's bickering, the Pope waived his right, and the formal meeting occurred, the Patriarch kissing the Pope's cheek as an equal." (94)

"The real contest was one for prestige and recognized authority." (95)

"The four most important differences to be discussed were: (1) the procession of the Holy Ghost; (2) leavened and unleavened bread in the Eucharist; (3) purgatory; and (4) Papal supremacy." (96)

"With that victory assured the Latins, the Pope promised to send military and naval forces to Constantinople, and to rouse Western Christendom in a crusade in defence of the Greeks against the Mohammedans." (97)

From the decree on union: "the following terms of agreement: (1) The Latin statement of the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost was accepted. (2) The use of either leavened or unleavened bread in the Eucharist was permitted. (3) The two views about purgatory were allowed. (4) The Roman Pope was recognized as the head of Christendom." (98)

From the treaty between Pope and Emperor: "The Pope should send all the Greeks home at his own expense. (2) The Pope should supply annually two galleys and 300 soldiers for Constantinople. (3) That all ships proceeding to the Holy Land should stop at Constantinople first, (4) That in event of dire need, the Pope should supply twenty galleys for six months or ten for a year. (5) That the Pope should use his influence with the western powers to induce them to aid the Greek Emperor against the Mohammedan Turks." (99)

'Have you won a triumph over the Latins?' was eagerly asked of the returning (Greek) prelates....the Greeks were keenly disappointed and popular opposition im-

(94) FLICK, p. 198 (95) IBID, p. 199 (96) Op. Cit.

(97) IBID, p. 200 (98) IBID, p. 201 (99) IBID, p.201





mediately arose.....the West organized no great crusade against the Turks.....in 1443 the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria issued an encyclical letter condemning the Council of Florence as a council of robbers and pronounced the Patriarch of Constantinople a matricide and a heretic. Within ten years, Constantinople was in the hands of the hated Turks." (100)

The political, certainly the irreligious nature, of issues involved in the schism must be apparent. Robinson names the church the "most powerful and permanent of all the institutions of the later Roman Empire." (101) Perhaps that is the root of the matter, for in the East the State became the Church and in the West the Church became the State. Wasn't it Reinhold Niebuhr who said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely? Perhaps in that sentence is hidden the real clue to the reasons for the great schism of Catholic Christianity.

From the time of Constantine the church was inextricably tied up with the state. Historical circumstances made it necessary; nevertheless one cannot help but share Kierkegaard's feeling, "Christianity does not need this suffocating protection of the State!" (102) The point however was that the state needed Christianity, and it obtained its support.

---

(100) IBID, p. 201-2.

(101) ROBINSON, p. 41.

(102) KIERKEGAARD, p. 570





The church became an institution whose original inspiration seemed either to have congealed or evaporated; power, pelf, secular politics and non-religious interests occupied its attention. (103) And yet it carried civilization, and the gospel, through a dark period in the development of our culture. The fundamental reason for its persistence was man's torturous search after salvation, in those days largely a scramble to escape the yawning jaws of hell. In conclusion, it is necessary to report that the effect of environment had almost completely eradicated the "good news" from the formal content of the church's message, creed and organization.

---

(103) INGE, p. 3, 26.



BIBLIOGRAPHY CHAPTER IV

## Reference

## Title:

- ADENEY, W. F., "The Greek And Eastern Churches", New York, Scribner's, 1908. \*
- AUGUSTINE, St., "On The Trinity", THE NICENE AND POST-NICENE FATHERS, Vol. III., edited by P. Schaff, Buffalo Christian Lit. Co., 1887. --also as quoted by G. W. Richards in an article, "Zwingli's Pathway to Certainty", CANADIAN JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT, March-May, 1932., p. 112. \*
- AYER, J. C., "A Source Book For Ancient Church History", New York, Scribners, 1913. \*
- BURY, J. B., "Roman Empire, Later", ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA, 11th Ed., Vol. 23. \*
- CASE, S. J., "Makers Of Christianity", New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1934.
- COLLINS, R. W., "A History Of Medieval Civilization In Europe", Ginn and Company, Boston, 1936.
- CURTIS, W. A., "A History Of Creeds and Confessions Of Faith in Christendom and Beyond", Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1911. \*
- FISHER, G. P., "A History Of Christian Doctrine", (See Ch. II).
- FISHER, H. A. L., "A History Of Europe", Vol I: Ancient & Medieval; London, Eyre And Spottiswoode, 1935.
- FLICK, A. C., "The Decline Of The Medieval Church", Vol. II, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Tribner & Co., Ltd., 1930. \*
- GIBBON, E., "The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire", 5 vols., with notes by Rev. H. H. Milman, New York. T. Y. Crowell Co., 1845. \*
- HARNACK, A., "History Of Dogma", 7 vols., (See Ch. III). \*





- HEFELE, C. J., "A History Of The Christian Councils, From The Original Documents, To the Close Of The Council Of Nicaea, A. D. 325.", translated and edited by W. R. Clark, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1862. \*
- JONES, R. M., "The Churches Debt To Heretics", London, J. Clarke & Co., 1924.
- KIERKEGAARDE, S., Quoted in an article, "Kierkegaard And His Century", by W. G. Moore, in the HIBBERT JOURNAL, July, 1938.
- LATOURETTE, K. S., "A History Of The Expansion Of Christianity", 3 vols. (See Ch. III). \*
- LUNN, H., "The Nicene Council And Its Creed", an article in THE REVIEW OF THE CHURCHES, July 1926.
- McGIFFERT, A. C., "A History Of Christian Thought", 2 vols. (See Ch. II). \*
- MOFFATT, J., "The First Five Centuries Of The Church", (See Ch. II).
- McKINTON, J., "From Christ To Constantine", London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1936.
- MONCRIEF, J. W., "A Short History Of The Christian Church", New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1908.
- O.E.C., "Orthodox Eastern Church", article in ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA, Vol. 20 (unsigned). \*
- RICHARDSON, C. C., "The Church Through The Centuries", New York, Scribner's, 1938.
- ROBINSON, J. H., "Medieval and Modern Times", Revised ed., Boston, Ginn & Co., 1931.
- ROBINSON 2, J. H., "Readings In European History", Vol. 1., Boston, Ginn & Co., 1904. \*
- RUSSELL, B., "Power", New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1938.
- SPINKA, M., "The Effect Of The Crusades Upon Eastern Christianity", an essay in the vol. "Environmental Factors In Christian History" See Ch. II)



- SEIGNOBOS, C., "The Rise Of European Civilization", translation, London, Jonathan Cape, 1939.
- WALKER, W., "A History Of The Christian Church", (See Ch. II).
- WELLS, H. G., "The Outline Of History", revised, New York, Garden City Publishing Co., 1931.
- van PAASEN, P., "Days Of Our Years", New York, Hillman-Curl, Inc., 1939.



## Chapter V

FEUDALISM AND THE ATONEMENT

"The devil was conquered when ... Christ was slain. For then that blood, since it was His who had no sin at all, was poured out for the remission of our sins." (Augustine)(1)

"In the ordinary course of things, nothing is more intolerable than that a creature should derive his Creator of due honor and not repay that of which he deprives him". (Anselm)(2)

Until the twelfth century Christians were content to testify to their belief that the grace of God was mediated to them through the church, and that in Jesus God did save and was still redeeming mankind. Few asked why salvation had to take place in just that way. Indeed, from Origen and Tertullian to Augustine what is known as the ransom theory was universally held, and was not seriously challenged by anyone up to the writing of Anselm's *CUR DEUS HOMO*.(3)

(1) AUGUSTINE p. 177.

(2) ANSELM p. 27.

(3) BROWN p. 643: "In the writings of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa as of Irenaeus before them the death of Christ is interpreted as a ransom paid by God to Satan in order to secure the redemption of humanity which has been brought under his dominion by sin."  
See also AUGUSTINE bk. 13:12-15.





Anselm (1033-1109), although thoroughly orthodox, revolted like the second century heretic Marcion<sup>had</sup>, against the harshness of this prevailing conception of God. It was not the righteous God of the Old Testament which he repudiated, but the God of the early Latin church. He sharply rejected the idea of a God who would condemn an innocent man to a horrible death in order to free the guilty from the power of one his own fallen angels. After conclusively refuting this theory in the first few pages of his essay(4) Anselm faces the question, CUR DEUS HOMO? Why was it necessary for God to become man that we might be saved?

His answer, in outline, runs as follows. Man is made for blessedness which is unattainable on earth because of sin, and available in future life only if he is freed from sin.(5) Sin consists in disobedience;(6) and no amount of obedience can repay God for the dishonor done him by past negligence in the doing of his will.(7) Men, who owe God everything of which they are

---

(4) ANSELM p. 12

(5) IBID p. 23

(6) IBID p. 24

(7) IBID p. 24



capable, are hence unable of themselves to find salvation or to render satisfaction to God for the honor which they have abstracted from him.(8) On the other hand God by his mercy is unable freely to forgive wrongdoers for the reason that his honor, the integrity of his will, constitutes the moral government of the universe.(3) If he did forgive he would not be God; and he obviously would not be just.(10) We are forced to the conclusion that God's honor must somehow be restored or else the sinners punished.(11)

But only one who can repay God with a surplus of merit is competent to erase the stain on God's character because all human beings owe him complete submission to his will from the beginning.(12) Similarly, since even the smallest act of disobedience is an infraction of God's rule and thus worth more than the whole creation, something greater than all of life is required to make amends.(13) But only God is greater

---

(8) IBID p. 57,28

(9) IBID p. 25.

(10) IBID p. 60.

(11) IBID p. 60.

(12) IBID p. 66

(13) IBID p. 51.





than all of life.(14) However, if man is to be saved, it must be man who does the restoration.(15) We Conclude, says Anselm, that reparation must be made by one who is both God and man.(16) One further point: satisfaction must be made freely, for what kind of a is it who compels the innocent to die for those whom his own omnipotence has permitted to be the guilty?(17)

These are the conditions of salvation and the reasons why, <sup>to Anselm</sup> only Christ could meet them. For Christ, being God, did not have to become man; and being the completely obedient man (and in his life and death an example for others)(18) he did not have to die, for only sin induces mortality.(19) But he voluntarily offered himself as a satisfaction greater than all that was owing to God;(20) and then bestowed the fruits of his retribution on those for whose salvation he had made himself man.(21) In this manner mankind is freed from the bondage laid upon it by Adam,(22) and each individual

---

(14) IBID p. 66

(15) IBID p. 67.

(16) IBID p. 67ff.

(16) IBID p. 75.

(18) IBID p. 80, 101, 105

(19) IBID p. 62, 77, 80.

(20) IBID p. 101.

(21) IBID p. 105.

(22) IBID p. 106.



is now able because of Christ to participate freely in the grace of God by living as is taught in scriptures.(23) God's mercy consists, then, in the free offering of his own son in order that men, who are eternally damned of their own actions by his justice, may attain that state of blessedness for which God originally designed human nature.(24)

In Anselm redemption is portrayed not as an act whereby man is bought from the devil but as the sacrifice of Christ which is "represented as a debt paid God's mercy by God's justice".(25) Burkitt points out that neither Marcion nor Anselm succeeded in successfully relating these two attributes of God. We are not here concerned to criticise Anselm's position save to remark that however naive it may appear to us today it functioned more effectively in that feudal age than those of his predecessors. The problem in this chapter is the discovery of the source of his characteristic modes

---

(23) IBID p. 106, "It seems to me God could reject no human being, coming to Him in this Name ... Thus it is, if he approach in the right way. But, how one ought to enter into participation of so great grace, and how to live under it are taught everywhere in Holy Scripture." See RASHDALL, p. 355 where he points out that Anselm accepted the doctrine of free will in the popular sense.

(25) BURKITT p. 301,

(24) ANSELM p. 107, 23, 61, 63, 66.





of thinking. Marcion had absorbed his from Gnosticism: what influences were there in the life of the mediaeval theologian which the early heretic lacked?

Two points stand out throughout Anselm's discussion. The first is the idea that disobedience, sin, is a sort of personal insult to God's honor; the second, that the coordination of the two attributes of justice and mercy is secured by having Christ, who is the equal of God in nature, voluntarily descend to the status of man to render personal satisfaction for the affront in order that men may be provided with the possibility of salvation. As McGiffert points out, the advance he made over the current theory was that Christ was not punished for our sin but offered God satisfaction on account of it.(26) He made it possible for God to forgo the punishment of sinners without compromising his authority, and to exercise his mercy without undermining his justice.

Anselm's preoccupation is with the Godward side of the atonement rather than with the legal rights of the devil; and his chief concern always is that God's

---

(26) MCGIFFERT p. 198.





"honour" be "satisfied". Just what do these two terms mean, and where do they come from? When one reads the literature on the subject one discovers that they can be thought of as having come from four possible sources.

The first source that Anselm might have been influenced by is Roman law. "Satisfaction" was not payment but took the place of punishment in the case of private offences in certain principles of Roman law commonly practised in the feudal period. Such offences "must be punished unless satisfaction is made. Thus Sulpitius Severus says: 'Fornication is liable to punishment unless it is purged by satisfaction.'"(27) That is, an assertion of one's honour was sufficient settlement.

A second influence undoubtedly was the penitential system of the Latin church. It rested on the idea that penance, as a satisfaction offered to God in this life, might through the church ensure remittance of punishment for sin, in the next. ~~Gave tells us that~~ "This practise of penance tended to be commercialized. Thus in the canons of Edgar of England, A.D. 959-75,

---

(27) GREENSTED p. 122, from Severus DIAL. ii, 10:  
"Fornicatio deputatur ad poenam, nisi satisfactione



there is a curious explanation of how a rich man may accomplish a seven years' fast in three days -- not by fasting himself but by getting 852 men to fast for three days in his stead."(28)

Again, Anselm's age was the age of chivalry. Each period in history has its own peculiar set of ideals; and when the Patristic age (in which war and brigandage disturbed the social order) ended not long after the death of Charlemagne, it was supplanted by the Mediaeval in which the dominant ideal became that of the spirit of chivalry with its characteristic notions of "honor" and "satisfaction".(29)

Finally, the social relations which were established in the feudal period, and which had taken definite form about the 10th century,(30) under Teutonic and other influences, changed the scope of the old Roman idea of satisfaction. From an abstract legal concept it became, along with all justice and law, a personal matter.

G. B. Adams, in his article FEUDALISM in the

---

(28) CAVE p. 123; see also HARNACK VI: 56 ff., McGIFFERT 198 ff., and GREENSTED op. cit.

(29) SMITH p. 76; COLLINS p. 533; SEIGNOBOS p. 156-7.

(30) ADAMS p. 300(a).





Encyclopedia Brittanica traces the evolution of mediaeval social concepts. He states that after Charlemagne's empire had collapsed what the individual in the later Roman and early mediaeval society needed above everything else was protection and from that need developed typical personal relationships between the chief men, or lords, and the lesser who sought their aid. The subjects were not owners of the land, but tenants; "and the tenure by which a thing of value was held was one of honorable service, not economic but moral and political in character".(31) The man swore homage, was given a fief and became a vassal; and when he failed to discharge to his lord the obligations which that laid upon him he lost his right and title to the fief. Government was almost entirely dependent upon the barons who stood between their people and all manner of menace, including the king. Thus members of feudal courts met to fulfil not a duty to the community but the obligations they had assumed to their lords. "Private law had usurped the place of public law. Public duty had become private obligation."(32)

---

(31) IBID p. 300(b).

(32) IBID p. 301(b).



It is easy to understand how, under such conditions, breaches of law infringed upon personal dignity with the result that satisfaction, to be commensurate with the injury sustained, had adequately to restore the personal honor of the one offended.(33)

It is from the standpoint of such "satisfactions" that Anselm works out his theory. Scholars vary (34) in the stress they place upon each of these four sources, but whatever their theories they all agree with Cave when he remarks that Anselm's doctrine presupposes feudal ideas.(35) After 300 years it stands to reason that both the penitential system of the church and Roman

---

(33) A good example is given by CAVE, p. 122f.: "Germanic law recognized the payment of a WERGILD, an honour-price, varying in amount according to the status of the person injured. Thus, whereas the killing of an ordinary man could be paid for cheaply, to kill a feudal lord was so grave a crime that no ordinary man could hope to make adequate satisfaction." The dishonour incurred was irreparable. See also COLLINS, Ch. XI, especially p. 224 ff: "Vassal and suzerain were bound to each other by mutual obligations ... any infringement (of which)... was regarded with the utmost horror".

(34) McGiffert and Harnack over-emphasize the influence of the penitential system, in my opinion. The rest, especially the final five are in substantial agreement with our own approach: see McGIFFERT Ch. 8; HARNACK VI: 54-83; RASHDALL: 350-7; FAIRBAIRN p. 122-24; CASE p. 242; CAVE p. 122-133; MOZLEY p. 124-132; FISHER p. 221; WALKER p. 263-4; SMITH p. 74-96; GREENSTED Ch. VI.

(35) I am indebted to Prof. Clyo Jackson for this illustration.





law would themselves have been thoroughly "feudalized".

It was life on the baronial estate which provided the mould in which Anselm's theory was cast. In those days the lords sat at dinner on a raised platform at one end of the dining-hall; the serfs sat at a low table on the main floor of the room. One can imagine Anselm's mind unconsciously influenced by the analogy between the relationship of baron and tenant and that which held between God and man.

Those at the low table are the sinners. They owe their lord an obedience which they can never hope to discharge and are therefor doing him irreparable dishonor. How are they to be saved; in practical life, how are they to keep their fiefs? None of them are worthy to approach the dignity of the lord and make amends. The case is hopeless unless one who possesses every right to grace the high table voluntarily steps down to the low and by the perfect discharge of his obligations as a vassal restores the lord's honor; and thus makes it possible for him to forgive them and keep them on.

The details of the illustration are of no importance. What matters is that some such theory must be postulated to account for Anselm's advance on Augustine





and the other Latin theologians. He does not regard God as a judge, but rather as a feudal overlord who must at all costs safeguard his honor and demand adequate satisfaction for any damage to it.(36) There is one other reason why Anselm's doctrine must be regarded as the product of the social relations of feudal society. The details of his thesis, as many have pointed out, received scant attention, but the fundamental change in approach from legal to feudal concepts, from punishment to satisfaction was finally accepted by everyone. Surely this sudden demise of the ransom theory is explainable only on the grounds that Anselm's theory expressed the ideals of a new age, and solved a basic religious problem in terms which were on the tongues of all men in his time.(37) These were the highest concepts they possessed, and Anselm simply interpreted Jesus in terms of them. Hence his success.

The influence of feudalism thus accounts satisfactorily for the two main strains in the argument pointed out on page . It was of course his own desire to probe the meaning of the incarnation, to find a way

---

(36) GRENSTED p. 123.

(37) GRENSTED p. 70



out of the dilemma he had put himself in by refusing to believe in the ransom theory on the one hand, or that men could effect their own salvation on the other, and to answer the question "How can you be saved?"(38) -- it was, I repeat, his desire to find a solution to those problems which impelled him to write his book.

Unfortunately he reduced salvation to a matter of judicial relationships. Faith in God lost its New Testament significance and was replaced by acceptance of Church dogma and religious precepts.(39) He made a positive contribution to the problem nonetheless, and the insufficiency of the argument for us is due to the limitations of his age; to the fact that the formal content of his doctrine was derived from the social relationships which obtained in the feudal society in which he lived. (40)

---

(38) ANSELM p. 49.

(39) MacINTOSH p. 324.

(40) An effort towards ecumenism can be seen in Anselm. He resolved the intellectual difficulties of the educated classes of his day, making it possible for them to worship along with the common man who continued to hold to the ransom theory of the atonement.





BIBLIOGRAPHY CHAPTER V

## Reference Title,

- ADAMS, G.B., "Feudalism", *Encyclopædia Britannica*,  
Eleventh Edition, Vol. 10. \*
- ANSELM, St., "Cur Deus Homo", translation, Edinburgh,  
John Grant, 1909. \*
- AUGUSTINE, St., "On the Trinity", (See Ch. IV). \*
- BROWN, W.A., "Expiation and Atonement", *HASTINGS DICT.*  
Vol. V.
- BURKITT, F.C., "The Gospel History and its Transmission"  
(See Ch. II).
- CAIRD, J. "The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity",  
Glasgow, J. MacLehose and Sons, 1904.
- CASE, S.J., "Jesus Through the Centuries", Chicago,  
Chicago University, 1932.
- CAVE, S., "The Doctrine of the Work of Christ", London,  
University of London, 1937.
- COLLINS, R.W., "A History of Mediaeval Civilization in  
Europe", (See Ch. IV).
- FAIRBAIRN, A.M., "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology",  
New York, Scribners', 1911.
- FISHER, G.P., "History of the Christian Church", London,  
Hodder and Stoughton, 1887.
- GREENSTED, L.W., "A Short History of the Atonement",  
Manchester, University of Manchester, 1920. \*
- HARNACK, A., "History of Dogma", 7 Vol. (See Ch. III).
- MACINTOSH, H.R., "The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus  
Christ". New York, Scribners', 1912.
- McGIFFERT, A.C., "History of Christian Thought", Vol.  
II (See Ch. II). \*



WOZLEY, J.K., "The Doctrine of the Atonement", New York, Scribners', 1916.

SMITH, D., "The Atonement in the Light of History and the Modern Spirit", London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1918.

RASHDALL, H., "The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology", London, Macmillan's, 1919.

WALKER, W., "A History of the Christian Church" (See Ch. II



THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND

"The clergy cannot travel by both roads, civil and evangelical." (1376)<sup>1</sup>.

"Be it enacted by the authority of this present Parliament that the king our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted and reputed the only supreme head on earth of the church of England, called Anglicana Ecclesia....The Act of Supremacy (1534)"<sup>2</sup>

(i) THE REFORMATION.

The process has been described by which an imperialistic papacy secured a monopoly of grace. Salvation, once attributed to the free power of God in the soul of the individual was invested first of all in a messiah, then in an apostolic rule of faith, and finally in the cults and ceremonies of an apostolic church against whose temporal and spiritual sovereignty there could be no appeal. Doubtless the cosmopolitan church of Rome might have maintained its absolute authority for many years had it acted more like the medium of grace it lay claim to be, or had it discovered the wisdom to recognize and adjust itself to the new world which was arising out of the ashes of the feudal period during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

1. Wyclif, Civ. Dom., quoted in WORKMAN p.265  
2. Quoted by Lucas p. 533 from Gee and Hardy, Eng. Church Hist. Doc.





But these were the things it proved unable to accomplish. And abuses rooted in the temporal power it had taken to itself hastened the rebellion against it which was breaking out all over Europe.

There were many causes for the reformation, as the new outbreak came to be called. But behind them all lay the motivating force pointed out again, strangely enough, by Bertrand Russell:<sup>1</sup> namely, the revolutionary character of Christianity. In its origin an entirely non-political movement, it had revolutionized, conquered and assumed the forms of government and the authority of a whole empire. And when it in that manner became a state it was not thereby rendered immune from its own inner compulsions, for the anarchic fire that characterized its earlier strivings was not dead. It had merely, except for occasional flickerings, remained deeply buried for nearly a thousand years, and suddenly shot forth in the sixteenth century with all its ancient power.

---

1. RUSSELL p.106 - 114



It is interesting to observe the striking contrast between the earlier revolution and the one under discussion. In the second century Irenaeus's search for an authoritative throne of grace had led him to appeal from his own experience of God in Jesus to apostolic scripture, from scripture to apostolic creed, and from creed to the apostolic bishops who presided over the church. Fourteen centuries later a peasant monk, Martin Luther, travelled the same road but in the opposite direction. He too had found a gracious God, but through the medium of a 'faith' which he said transcended the legalistic 'works' of the church. Beginning where Irenaeus left off, Luther appealed to the apostolic Bishop against those accusing him of heresy, from the Pope to the apostolic bishops or General Council, and from the Council to the apostolic word of God found, he said, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, in the Bible. Scripture was perfectly clear and unmistakable in its meaning; and the true doctrine revealed by Christ, argued Luther, was to be found not in the tradition handed down by the church, but in the writings in which revelation is directly expressed.





At the same time preparation had been going on all over Europe for a new spiritual revolution. The establishment of law and order in the feudal period, the Renaissance, the rise of science, the growth in usage of vernacular tongues, the invention of printing the spread of education, the 14th century mystics, the pre-reformation struggles of Wyclif and Huss,-- these and countless other influences had set the charge which required only the spark from the genius of great leadership to set it off. The latter was contributed by men like Erasmus, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Socinus<sup>1</sup> and others; and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the scenes of religious strife, war and persecution reminiscent of the days of Diocletian. From it all emerged the various branches of the Christian religion which we now call Protestantism.

- 
1. They all followed the same method, the study of sacred scripture. And they all rejected tradition as a distortion of revealed truth.



Up to this point economic and political factors have not been mentioned. Historians divide in their interpretation of the Reformation but they all agree that it was both a religious and a political movement; like Elizabeth's problem upon accession to the English throne it was a problem, "of which politics formed the web and religion the woof."<sup>1</sup>

On the continent, the spiritual revolt initiated by Luther became linked with the nationalistic aspirations of the German principalities and the economic demands of the peasantry. The same was true of the groups led by Calvin, Zwingli and Socinus: a spiritual and theological rebellion allied itself with political and economic forces visible to the alert observer beneath the worn and cracked facade of European feudalism.

<sup>2</sup>  
In England events took a different course. There, political and economic factors played a greater role than the religious; for the spiritual revolution did not come until the Puritan revolt in the 17th century, after the new church had been created.

---

1. PULLAN p.38

2. LINDSAY p.313, SMITH p.286, LUCAS p.533  
INGE p.72.



The reformation in England has been selected here as a crucial instance from this period for just that reason. In Germany, France and Switzerland, political and religious forces were so entangled it is extremely difficult to disengage the influence of the former on the formation of belief. But in England the political-economic factors are relatively easy to observe and evaluate. Nevertheless the English revolution, like all the reformation schisms, was grounded in the religious dynamic just depicted. Spiritual revolution was in the air; as a matter of fact, the English break could scarcely have been accomplished with so little bloodshed had it not been that the minds of the people were prepared for it by the events of the preceeding three centuries.

(11) FACTORS DETERMINING THE FORMATION OF THE  
ANGLICAN CHURCH

In essence, the English reformation was an assertion of nationalism. It was a class revolt determined by the political, economic and sociological factors which arose in the transaction from feudal to





a mercantile society.

The development of the mercantile system and finance capitalism produced a new class, the bourgeoisie, who demanded peace and order, a strong government, and the freedom to carry on the trade from which their money and power was derived. As in the Italian cities of the renaissance, peace and wealth made possible the leisure in which culture, science and individual personality could develop. This new class, and the disciplines which flourished under its protection, produced a nationalistic and individualistic spirit that claimed England for Englishmen, and every Englishman's home for his castle!

On the political side, England, since the thirteenth century had been impatient with papal claims to temporal authority. Grievances and conflict over Italian taxation of English church property and Italian appointment of English prelates occupied the attention of every English king from that time forward, and came to a head with Henry VIII. The devastation wrought in the

- 
1. MARTI p. xix, "A national consciousness emerged and developed that resented the idea of allegiance to Rome, and the tribute sent there yearly the papacy clung to a vision of ecclesiastical imperialism over against which sprung up the spirit of English nationality."



ranks of the baronial class by the Wars of the Roses, and the patriotism stirred in the heart of the people by war at home and abroad and by the threat of Catholic Philip of Spain furnished the Tudor monarchy with an unprecedented opportunity for absolutism. Even so, the monarch was never strong enough to seize power alone, but united with the bourgeoisie, who were themselves unable to wield the power necessary for control of the country, to defeat the papacy, the local clergy and the feudal barons. They began by seizing the wealth of the monasteries in a "revolution of the rich"<sup>1</sup> which formed the basis of the present English aristocracy and cemented the alliance between crown and the nouveaux riches.

Even ecclesiastical and religious motives sprang from economic and political situations primarily. Wyclif, the father of the English Reformation, was typical of all his successors in holding that the temporal power and wealth of the church was at the bottom of all its troubles, and for that matter the ills of the nation as well. He advocated the confiscation of

---

1. CHESTERTON p. 133





church wealth and the abolition of all its financial privileges by the secular power. He said all men had immediate access to God without mediation of priest, that the church was the body of the predestinate, that all men should have the bible in their own tongue and that various other ecclesiastical dogmas were to be condemned as not necessary for salvation. He was fired by the conviction that the business of the church was simply and directly the souls of men, and consequently that the religious hierarchy appointed to rule and administer in the name of Christ ought to be supplemented with, if not replaced by a group of plain, earnest priests who would go about among the people preaching the word of God without desire for gain.

It will be convenient to sketch the story of the founding of the Anglicana Ecclesia by tracing the separate influence of each of these three factors, political, economic and ecclesiastical, throughout the period that began with the coronation of Henry VIII and ended with the death of Elizabeth.



(a) POLITICAL.

Constantine and his successors in the fourth century formulated the principle that defection from the church was a crime in the eyes of the state. And until the reformation most people assumed that the task of the church was to interpret to individuals the commands of God which its doctrine asserted were to be obeyed rather than man. The England of Henry VIII's time however was ready to change all that, ready to take charge of its own church, ready to convey God's commands to men through the medium of the state, ready in other words to dispense with the international organisation which until then besides interpreting the will of God had repeatedly proven itself stronger than any secular government. How had this come about?

Any account of the sixteenth century in England has to reckon with the events of the fourteenth when, but for circumstance, Wyclif's anti-clericalism and the Peasants Revolt might have conspired to produce the reformation years ahead of its time. <sup>1</sup> Wyclif (d.1384) anticipated the majority of the reformation doctrines. In 1529 Luther wrote of Huss, who copied his doctrine word for word from Wyclif, "We are all of us Hussites without knowing it...Paul and Augustine are Hussites to the <sup>2</sup> Letter." Dean Inge says, "the Anglican Church never

---

1. WORKMAN 1:273,279, CHESTERTON p.138-9. 2. WORKMAN 1:9  
(from Luther, 'Letters')



became Zwinglian or Lutheran or Calvinist. It would, on the whole, be truer to say that the English Reformation looked back to Wyclif and resumed the work which he had<sup>1</sup> begun."

Wyclif's radical teaching and his struggle against the papacy expressed the national dissatisfaction of his<sup>2</sup> age: "It was not a rising of the poorer class, but a national awakening favored at first by the kings, and directed against Papal absolutism."<sup>3</sup> Although driven underground by persecution it persisted into the sixteenth century and laid the foundation for the revolution of that period.<sup>4</sup>

Wyclif's life lies outside the compass of this discussion, but his cardinal doctrines are directly to the point. It was the political, rather than the dogmatic elements in the papal absolutism which drew

---

1. INGE p. 6      2. FLICK p. 340: This period marks the beginning of the severance of the English church from the people. "Because of the 100 Years War, the Black Death, The division of Parliament into two houses in 1341, and the Peasants Revolt of 1381, the 14th century saw greater social changes than any other... except the 19th."      3. INGE p. 33      4. LINDSAY p. 316-18, WORKMAN 1:12.





Wyclif's attack at the outset. His doctrine of divine and civil dominion merits most attention. "The pope", he said, "ought to leave unto the secular power all temporal dominion...the pope should restore the clergy to their primitive freedom by throwing off the burden Sylvester laid upon him by accepting the Donation of Constantine...Christ refused temporal dominion, the pope seeks it."<sup>1</sup> Priests ought not to hold property, or secular office, and the authority of the church, he argued, pertains only to spiritual matters.<sup>2</sup> Even this latter springs only from righteous living: "sanctity is the sign of authority", and papal orders are to be tested by scripture.<sup>3</sup> Like Piers the Plowman he demanded with wearisome reiteration the disendowment of the church which "habitually abused" the land it possessed, in order that the country "might be stronger" and the clergy restored to their original apostolic state.<sup>4</sup> Explicitly, he taught that the dignity of the king was derived directly from God and hence that the sovereign could correct and punish the clergy who abused their posi-

---

1. WORKMAN 1:310. 265. 11:81. 3. IBID 11:12,73,77.  
2. IBID p. 277; 11:243,21,23,26. 4. IBID 1:278, 11:5,28.



tion. Disgusted by the Great Schism, during which two popes lay claim to the apostolic see, he cried, in the paraphrase of Workman, "The Pope has rejected Christ, so Christendom, especially the secular lords must reject the Pope and restore the church to its primitive poverty."<sup>1</sup>

Wyclif asserted in writing and through parliament that the power of the church was disastrous for both church and state. The church was not a formal organisation to which everyone belonged at birth, but the society of the righteous; papal authority was based on a false claim which the state must correct. Disendowment would at one stroke eliminate the canker at the heart of both institutions; gross financial evils would be rooted out of the body politic, and the church would be restored to its ancient simplicity.

Unfortunately the country was not yet ready for his teaching; also his alliance with the unscrupulous and reactionary John of Gaunt ruined his chance for a national revolution against papal despotism.<sup>2</sup> The Peasants Revolt with which he was but indirectly connected discredited him in the eyes of the nobles; for they then saw in his doctrines a source of social unrest which

---

1. IBID 11:82,29.

2. IBID 1:279, 11:322.





might not merely liquidate the property of the clergy,  
but their own as well.<sup>1</sup> His denials of responsibility  
were useless, especially as he could not conceal his  
sympathy for the rebels. Wyclif died in 1384, and  
Lollardry among the gentry by about 1417.<sup>2</sup> The latter  
persisted until the sixteenth century among the common  
people in whom, by that time, acquaintance with the  
vernacular bible and a consequent distrust of the  
papacy, helped to provide a measure of popular support  
for Henry VIII's break with Rome, and paved the way for  
doctrinal changes under Elizabeth.<sup>3</sup>

The chief sources of irritation between Rome and  
England in Wyclif's age were four: "provisions", or  
the papal right to fill vacant benefices and to receive  
the payments therefrom; exemption of church property  
from taxation; jealousy between secular and ecclesiasti-  
cal courts; and the absolute temporal authority claimed  
by the pope.<sup>4</sup> As Robinson points out, the English were  
better able to defend themselves against papal control  
than other countries, and from 1343 on they passed a  
series of measures which made "provisions" illegal<sup>5</sup>  
and forbade appeal to a foreign tribunal of cases which

---

1. IBID 11:236      2. MARTI p. 116.      3. LINDSAY p. 316,  
HUNT p. 446-7, MARTI p. 126, 117.      4. ROBINSON p. 6.  
5. STATUTE PROVISORS 1351, 1390, 1393 forbade the grant-  
ing of benefices by papal letter.



could appear before English courts.<sup>1</sup> Rome learned, in the words of Innocent VI, "How suspicious the English are."<sup>2</sup> In 1366 parliament forbade the king to pay the pope tribute thirty-three years in arrears; and eleven years later the "Good Parliament" confirmed this anti-papal attitude in such strong terms that the king was again able to forbid the entrance of bulls into the kingdom without royal consent.<sup>3</sup>

When Henry VIII (1509-1547) came to the throne civil war was a vivid memory, a new national spirit was developing, the old baronial class was broken up, discontent over papal claims had become universal, and the emergence of a new age was becoming visible to those with eyes to see. In Europe England occupied a position midway between the great states of France and Spain, and the petty principalities of Germany, Scandinavia, the Lowlands and Scotland.

Henry's policy was determined by two main objects: to make himself completely absolute in his own domain, and to gather enough wealth to do so independently. From that standpoint his actions were logical enough. He first of all crushed the nobility by allying himself

---

1. STATUTE PRAEMUNIRE, 1353, 1365, 1393 forbade appeals to foreign courts. 3. WORKMAN 1:274, LUCAS p. 87.





with "the people", that is the new class of landowners and merchants for whom he kept order and made trade feasible within the kingdom. Next, he made a test of the papacy.

For Henry realized that the key to the international situation lay with Rome, by this time in every king's eyes a crumbling secular state. If England was to prosper she had to maintain a balance of power on the continent, and at the same time obtain a share of the wealth which flowed through the channels hewn out by Rome. There were two methods of doing this: One was to help and share in the papal financial exactions, the other to cut off English contributions to the holy see and divert them into the national treasury. That in mind, Henry made a test case for control of the papacy out of his appeal for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. There were at least two valid political reasons for the annulment. In the first place, Henry, at Wolsey's suggestion, was contemplating an alliance with France, and a Spanish wife naturally stood in the way. In addition Catherine had failed to provide him with a male heir, and the Wars of the Roses kept fresh in his mind the danger which that threatened to civil peace and to his own succession. Unfortunately for the





Roman church, Rome had just been sacked by the Emperor Charles V with his army of Germans and Spaniards, and the pope could do nothing but refuse Henry's request. When Henry pressed the matter the pope brought the case to the courts of Rome, and at once popular sentiment which in England had favored Catherine, turned to Henry's support:

"Nothing did more to alienate men's minds from the papacy, Henry would never have been able to obtain his divorce on its merits as they appeared to the people. But now the divorce became closely interwoven with another and wider question, the papal jurisdiction in England; and on that question Henry carried with him the good wishes of the vast bulk of the laity."<sup>1</sup>

The die was cast, and Henry resolved to allow no supremacy in England except his own. For seven years (1529-1536) the reformation parliament sat and passed a series of acts which cut off the church in England from Rome and subjected it to the single despotism of the crown. Henry made sure of his position by confiscating the wealth of the monasteries and distributing it to the bourgeoisie whose covetous eyes had long been feasting on ecclesiastical resources. In this manner he created a new nobility with an inviolable allegiance to the national church and the throne. From then on

---

1. LUCAS p. 539.



the character of the English church was determined<sup>1</sup>  
largely by the interests of the crown.

Under Henry who never sympathized with either  
Lutheranism or Lollardy, the church remained practi-  
cally Catholic in doctrine. Indeed towards the end of  
his reign Henry executed Catholics for disloyalty to  
his own supremacy, and Lutherans for denying transub-  
stantiation.<sup>2</sup> Under Edward VI Zwinglian and Lutheran  
forces, "a minority watched sullenly by the masses of  
the people",<sup>3</sup> tended to gain the upper hand. Mary  
Tudor brought the Catholic emphasis back again, but so  
violently that she gave an impetus to the growing tide  
of Protestant sentiment. "Under Elizabeth, a form of  
nationalism associated with Protestantism became both  
necessary and lucrative. Self-preservation demanded  
the defeat of Catholic Spain..<sup>4</sup>" Political necessity  
made permanent the work of reformation begun by  
Henry VIII: "The Church of England is at present what

---

1. LUCAS p. 537 (The King was able to so act because  
the separation was in accordance with the wishes of  
his subjects; generally speaking, Tudor despotism as  
a whole rested on the fact that its desires coincided  
with those of the masses.)

2. ROBINSON p. 17      3. MORTON p. 183      4. RUSSELL p. 113.





the Queen made it." <sup>1</sup> Power was passing out of the hands of the nobles, and whenever king and people united against clergy and nobles the reformation was a success; where the rulers were allies of the pope, as in France and Spain, <sup>2</sup> the revolution failed.

(b) ECONOMIC

The English reformation went through three distinct phases; severance of ecclesiastical jurisdiction under Henry VIII, doctrinal change under Edward VI, and spiritual revolution beginning in the Elizabethan era and ending with the Commonwealth. The roots of the Henrican phase were nourished by a set of revolutionary economic changes that favored the monarchy and which grew out of the rise and expansion of mercantilism from the 10th to the 16th centuries. The most prominent features of these changes were: The growth of towns with a middle burgher class and a lower class of artisans and free laborers; an agrarian revolution which led to land enclosure and the rise of a new class of landlords who coveted church property; the growth of a nationalistic spirit springing from the desire of the merchants for peace for trade; and finally the refusal on the part of the church to modify its privileges of tax



exemption, its demands for money, and the internal<sup>1</sup> corruption which its financial policies produced. Many of the financial irregularities common to the church went back three centuries in English history and there were several acute crises between monarch and clergy long before the advent of the sixteenth century: "...in document after document the cry against excessive fees, unjust ecclesiastical taxation, taxation, and against the impoverishment of the realm by means<sup>2</sup> of papal dues was continually reiterated."

Long before Wyclif's popular protests had been voiced against papal financial practises, and the control by the tax-free church of nearly a third<sup>3</sup> of the wealth of the kingdom. This vast economic power became more and more concentrated in the hands of a clerical minority, thus making it a menace to political sovereignty, inviting foreign interference, jeopardizing the national defense, and making continuous trouble in the matter of taxation. All this inefficiency and abuse of power led to widespread discontent in the 13th

---

1. MARTI p. XVI-XXI. 2. IBID p. XXI. 3. IBID p. 1; cf. the situation in Spain before the recent civil war: "The Church...had surrendered the greater part of its lands. On the other hand it had accumulated vast sources from every variety of interest...the value of its holdings was estimated at from 200 million pounds to one-third of the total national wealth." (ATHOLL) p. 26.





century, to agitation for disendowment in the fourteenth, and finally to liquidation of property under Henry in the sixteenth.

In the thirteenth century the two fold protest--discontent over papal financial privileges and disagreement with the economic abuses of the English clergy--began. Ecclesiastical imperialism of a feudal type soon ran afoul of an incipient English nationalism favored by those classes who had arisen with the commercial revolution outlined above. Innocent IV regarded King Henry III as his vassal<sup>1</sup> and assumed the right to levy tribute and other feudal dues; to this Henry is reported to have replied:

"The things which the pope would persuade us to do stretch themselves as farre as the Christian world is wide. And because England is but an out-angle thereof, when we shall see other kingdoms give us an example he shall find us more forward to obey." <sup>2</sup>

A few incidents will serve to illustrate this growth of opposition. At the Council of Bourges (1226) the English churches refused a papal demand for a number of foreign livings and threatened schism.<sup>3</sup> In the years 1231-1232 organized agitation against alien incumbents of English benefices, and against the right of provisions, issued

---

1. MARTI p. 28; the pope said, "It is desirable that we should put the king of England on the same level (excommunication) with that prince (Frederick II), so as to crush him, since he is our vassal and is now resisting us." 2. IBID p. 29 3. IBID p. 42.





in the confiscation of the goods of the foreign clergy,  
and their bestowal upon the poor.<sup>1</sup> Four years afterwards  
the bishop of London pronounced an anathema against the  
corrupt papal Italian bankers and attempt to oust them  
from his diocese.<sup>2</sup>

At the Council of Lyons (1245) Robert Grosseteste,  
bishop of Lincoln said that the Roman curia "appoints  
not pastors, but destroyers of the flock," and roundly  
denounced papal economic corruption.<sup>3</sup> William of  
Poweric, a layman at the same conference told the pope  
papal abuses could no longer be tolerated and asserted  
that the Italians carried off "more clear revenues from  
the kingdom than the king himself receives, who is the  
protector of the church and holds the reins of govern-  
ment in his hands."<sup>4</sup> Eight years later, vehemently  
rejecting Innocent IV's demand for a certain benefice,  
Grosseteste called the pope Antichrist, enumerated a  
long list of papal evils and prophesied that the end of  
it would be revolution.<sup>5</sup> Churchmen, barons, knights, all  
were agitated by a desire to rid themselves of papal  
oppression and taxation, the latter of which once rose  
to fully half the total revenue of the English clergy.

---

1. IBID p. 35      2. IBID p. 37-9      3. IBID p. 43  
4. IBID p. 44      5. IBID p. 51.



The barons wrote the Roman primate:

"Unless relief comes speedily scandal will arise urged on as we are ourselves as well as the king by the clamor of the people. It will be necessary for us unless the king and the kingdom are soon released from the practises by which they are oppressed to oppose ourselves as a wall for the house of the Lord and for the liberty of the kingdom. This we have, out of respect to the Apostolic See, hitherto delayed doing.."<sup>1</sup>

Had the king been strong at this point the separation would quite possibly have been consummated then and there. But Henry III's fear of the papacy triumphed. The baronial revolt of 1258, the Provisions of Oxford which reorganized the government, and de Montfort's radical assembly of 1265 were all provoked by a financial situation in which this arbitrary church taxation was a powerful factor.<sup>2</sup>

Turning to the fourteenth century a difference is at once apparent; this vague feeling of general discontent has taken form in the organized movement for disendowment sponsored by John Wyclif, and outlined on its political side in the preceding section.

Wyclif's political agitation did not grow up in a vacuum. In 1279 the Statute of Mortmain forbade alienation of land from civil jurisdiction by appropriating it to religious persons.<sup>3</sup> Under Henry III all parties had

---

1. IBID p. 71    2. IBID p. 77, MORTON p. 94-6.  
3. SMITH p. 41.





united against the papacy; in the time of Edward I it was the king and the national party against the pope and the English clergy. King Edward and the barons tried to prevent increase in clerical wealth and to keep land under the control of secular lords who were obliged to help with the military defense of the realm. From this it was a short step to the seizure of clerical wealth for defense measures, and in 1283 and 1293 Edward commandeered church funds for war purposes. The Hundred Years War, during which the church was under national supervision, led to the secularization of foreign religious houses in England. This was consummated in 1414 and a century later served as a precedent for the actions of Henry VIII.

The success of Wyclif's movement was due to his patriotism.<sup>1</sup> His political and religious convictions coincided with the economic demands of the barons and the king; his attack was basically against ecclesiastical wealth.

"Wyclif's theory for disendowment involved four major points: endowment was contrary to the divine order of things; it tended to the moral and spiritual decay of the clergy; it militated against the best secular interests of the realm; it was the duty of the lay lords to forcibly deprive the clergy of their goods."<sup>2</sup>

---

1. SMITH p. 42

2. MARTI p. 99



Poverty was the ideal and original condition of the priests. Endowment had degraded them and transformed the church from a Christian to a Caesarean body. Disendowment would therefore benefit the clergy as persons, the church as a national institution and the nation as a social, political and economic entity.<sup>1</sup> Unless the clergy reformed the king was to be held responsible as the true vicar of Christ, for confiscation; at least six attempts at the latter were made between Wyclif's death and the end of Henry V's reign.<sup>2</sup>

The next acute crisis did not come until 1533, the century of quiet being due to the distractions of war at home and abroad. Meanwhile the land question, the increase in ecclesiastical riches during the fifteenth century and the moral decline of the clergy had brought economic abuses once more to the fore. Colet, Erasmus, Simon, Fish and countless others had in unequivocal language bitterly denounced the greed of the clergy, and were favorably received by king and gentry.<sup>3</sup> The Acts of the reformation parliament--The two Petitions of the Commons, The Restraint of Annates, The Act Forbidding Papal Dispensations, and the payment of Peter's Pence--

---

1. IBID p. 109,111. 2. IBID p. 118 3. IBID p.137-150



demonstrate that its major grievances were the losses sustained by the English people through the economic <sup>1</sup> impositions of the papacy.

Revolution against Rome's abuses reached its head in the two acts for the suppression of the monasteries (1536, 1539). The motive for this step was both political and economic. The king needed money to preserve a united nation against the agrarian Catholic revolts which soon arose. He also feared the foreign influence <sup>2</sup> resident in the monasteries and resented the drain they represented on his military resources. But, like the new classes upon whom he relied for support, Henry's cupidity was aroused by the wealth of the churches; and he seized it and squandered it among his followers to ensure their loyalty to the crown, which he had now made absolute. It will be obvious that the real cause of confiscation were the forces of a new economic age. They doomed the non-commercial institutions of the anachronistic church which came to its senses at the Council of Trent too late to inaugurate the necessary economic reforms. Tawney thus:

---

1. IBID p. 159,173

2. IBID p. 178-9





"The England of the Reformation was to contemporaries a cauldron seething with economic unrest and social passions..of the grievances which exploded in the middle of the century..there was scarcely one..which had not evoked popular protests, been denounced by publicists, and produced legislation and administrative action, long before the Reformation Parliament met... ..the religious revolution's effect on the social situation was twofold. Since it produced a sweeping redistribution of wealth, carried out by an unscrupulous minority using the weapons of violence..it aggravated every problem..Since it released a torrent of writing on questions not only of religion, but of social organization, it caused a sweeping indictment of the new economic forces, and an eloquent restatement of the traditional theory of social obligations.....

It was an age in which popular hatred of the encloser and the engrosser found a natural ally in religious sentiment schooled, as it was, in a tradition which had taught that the greed of gain was a deadly sin. In England, on the Continent, doctrinal radicalism marched hand in hand with social conservatism. The classes whose backing was needed to make the Reformation a political success had sold their support on terms which made it inevitable that it should be a social disaster. The upstart aristocracy of the future had their teeth in the carcass, and, having tasted blood, they were not to be whipped off by a sermon....

As for the schools it swept them away wholesale in order to distribute their endowments among courtiers. There were probably more schools in proportion to the population at the end of the fifteenth century than there were in the middle of the nineteenth....

If the Reformation was a revolution, it was a revolution which left almost intact both the lower ranges of ecclesiastical organization and the traditional scheme of social thought...the Church..became in effect, one arm of the state;..



..a clergy, three-quarters of whom, as a result of the enormous transference of ecclesiastical property, were henceforward presented by lay patrons, were not likely to display any excessive independence. The canon law was nationalized, not abolished..."<sup>1</sup>

Under Edward the people, even those who had favored the break with the papacy, resented the enrichment and the conduct of the rapacious mercantile classes to whom they attributed much of their misery. They could muster little enthusiasm for a government so plainly bent on its own gain and they welcomed the Catholic Mary Tudor. However, Mary was but a hostage in the hands of the new landowning classes, for "she could not force a single squire to disgorge a single acre of church land."<sup>2</sup> Chesterton sums up her position in a typical epigrammatic saying, "she was allowed to deprive small men of their lives, she was not allowed to deprive great men of their property--or rather of other people's property."<sup>3</sup>

The triumph of the new church and the new moneyed classes was made secure under Elizabeth. When she came to the throne trade was stagnant, the coinage was debased, and the threat of Spain loomed in the distance. All this plus the persecuting excesses which Mary's zeal on behalf of the papacy had driven her to committ, made for a situation in which the whole country united behind the

---

1. TAWNEY p. 131-150. 2. MORTON p. 185 3. CHESTERTON p.153





crown to secure good government, prosperity and national safety. The masses were still Catholic at heart but the parliament which gave final form to the Anglican church was mainly middle-class in composition and listened to the demands of the queen as far as the details of the religious settlement were concerned.<sup>1</sup> With Spain's defeat the era of British imperialism began. The national state and national church became the instruments for an expanding industrial civilization which spread to the four corners of the earth and laid the foundations of a new culture on the North American continent.

(c) ECCLESIASTICAL

Professor Marti states that a desire for doctrinal reform played little part in the revolution of 1533.<sup>2</sup> This is true; but it is also a fact that a religious revolution was in the air.<sup>3</sup> "Christianity had penetrated Europe from the top down and in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was stirring the emerging middle classes of the cities and the urban and rural proletariat to new religious movements.....the religion which had been adopted en masse centuries before was now being appropriated as their own by the lower strata

---

1. LINDSAY Ch. IV. 2. MARTI p. 175. 3. Section (1), Ch.6



of society and they were giving to it their own complexion." <sup>1</sup> Wyclif's impatience with the financial evils of the church had led him to condemn the pope as Antichrist and to enunciate the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The English reformation followed his lead in many particulars. The Lollards and the left wing group among the reformers preached that Christ brought salvation to all those who were irresistably predestined for it, and this concept swept the country in the seventeenth century. The Christian humanists, like Colet, attacked clerical wickedness and urged a return to the pure gospel; many, taking their cue from Luther, taught justification by faith.

Pullan makes the acute observation that the heart of mediaeval English religion was not superstition but devotion to Jesus Christ, and that it was merely enfeebled <sup>2</sup> by superstition. The priests were ignorant, exploited and exploiting, but among them were many simple, pious folk. A purge was necessary, and a purge took place: the new church dispensed with papal authority, transubstantiation and certain other mediaeval accretions on the Christian religion. It kept the creeds, the councils and the apostolic succession; the real religious revolt

---

1. LATOURETTE p. 8, 16.

2. PULLAN p. 34.





did not show itself in the creeds of the new church but, except among the Puritans and the dissenters, was content in traditional English fashion with a compromise victory.

Tawney pointed out a significant state of affairs in the passage quoted above, when he remarked that education had spread further among the people than in any previous period. The vernacular bibles of Wyclif, Tyndale and Coverdale were in many ways the real revolutionary weapons of the reformation. The ignorant priesthood, unwilling to adjust to a new age soon lost<sup>2</sup> the respect of their parishioners. Dean Inge recounts,

"The rank and file of the clergy on the eve of the Reformation were so ignorant that their theological opinions were of no account whatever. At the visitation held by Hooper in the Diocese of Gloucester in 1551 it was found that out of 111 clergymen, 71 were unable to repeat the ten commandments, 10 could not repeat the Lord's Prayer, and 27 could not tell who was its author. No more than three or four out of the 111 had ever preached or could preach." <sup>1</sup>

The consequence of conditions like these, of the spread of the vernacular bibles, and the evolution of printing was that not only scripture but the writings of men like Wyclif, Erasmus, Colet, Luther, Calvin and Zwingli were comparatively widely discussed, and thus made their mark on the new national church. "In England as elsewhere

---

1. INGE p. 74. 2. cf. COLLING p. 313-332, where not only the ignorance but the immorality of the mediaeval clergy is depicted.





the significance of the Reformation was that it was the first issue of supreme importance to be argued by means of the press before the bar of public opinion sufficiently enlightened to appreciate its importance and sufficiently strong to make a choice and enforce its decision."<sup>1</sup>

What the sincere critics of the church desired was a return to the religion of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> They argued that true doctrine was not to be based on the traditions of a corrupt church but on a study of the sacred writings in which revelation was directly expressed. The great question of debate was whether justification, salvation was attainable by faith, or by works. On the continent the answer to this question among the protestants was found in the epistles of Paul. In the reformation period in England the answer given was determined to a great extent by the personal opinions of the reigning sovereign, modified of course by the exertions of the various groups of earnest reformers.

Under Henry VIII the Ecclesia Anglicana preserved the Catholic attitude and character which had impelled

---

1. SMITH p. 285      2. LATOURETTE p. 14. "It was a religious conviction which made Protestantism possible. Fresh religious experiences lay back of it. The most stirring of these centred about Jesus. In Protestantism the impulse which came from Jesus was breaking out afresh and more vigorously than ever before."



the king and his government to repudiate Lutheranism in 1521, had won for him from the pope the florious title of "Defender of the Faith"--as a reward for his "Defence of the Seven Sacraments."<sup>1</sup>

But after he had founded the new church (1534) Henry's first promulgation of a doctrinal basis was made with the view of a possible alliance between England and the Saxon Lutheran princes against the Emperor Charles V. The "Ten Articles" as it was called was a skilful compromise in that it showed the influence of Luther and at the same time scarcely contravened Catholic doctrine.<sup>2</sup> The anger of the German reformers was increased by the dictatorial method of its proclamation, for Henry had merely substituted a royal for a papal despotism. "It was the last step in the enslavement of religion. 'This king,' as Luther remarked, 'wants to be god. He founds articles of faith, which even the Pope never did.'"<sup>3</sup> In England rebellion followed the agrarian north rose against the religion of merchants. Henry put it down, and at the same time the project of a German alliance fell through,

---

1. SMITH p. 282 f., ROBINSON p. 16 2. HUNT p. 447, LINDSAY p. 335; the chief articles are given by CURTIS p. 852f., the three ancient creeds, the first four councils and the bible are retained as standards of orthodoxy; transubstantiation is ignored; justification is attained by faith joined with charity; only three sacraments are mentioned, baptism, eucharist and penance.





shattered on the rock of the Augsburg confession which the English king could not bring himself to accept. Henry promptly returned to his former attitude and allowed his reactionary prejudices full scope in the "King's Book", entitled "A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man;" set forth by the King's Majesty of England. It was essentially a more orthodox revision of the 1537 "Bishop's Book", and took its place alongside "The Six Articles Act" as an instrument for abolishing diversity of opinion; for Henry required obedience, or death as a punishment.<sup>1</sup> His only progressive doctrinal step, if it can be called that, was the order that a new vernacular version of the bible be prepared (called Mathew's Bible) and be placed in every church. The whole sacramental system of Rome was preserved as the means, and essentially the only means for the saving of souls. Doubtless for the majority of Englishmen in the year 1543 that sufficed: for both King and people clung to mediaeval theology however much they hated the pope.<sup>2</sup>

It is often said that the people of England separated from the pope under Henry VIII, and became Protestant under Edward VI (1547-1553). Preserved Smith

---

1. LINDSAY p. 348-9, HUNT p. 448    2. LINDSAY op. cit.



estimates there were four religious groups in existence<sup>1</sup> at this time. First there were strict Anglicans, orthodox and royalist comprising the bulk of the crown-loving, pope-hating but conservative commoners. Secondly, there were the pope's followers, strong in the north and among the clergy. Thirdly, there were the Lutherans, an active minority of bourgeoisie with leaders of high calibre like Coverdale, Ridley and Latimer. And lastly there were the Zwinglian and Anabaptist extremists, regarded as agitators. Edward's council immediately announced that state control was slackened and religious liberty was to be allowed. Reformers from the continent flocked into England and with the English bourgeoisie exercised an influence far out of proportion to their numbers in the shaping of the new Prayer Book and articles of creed. As this progressive element triumphed the Six Articles were repealed (1547) and replaced (1549) by a Book of Common Prayer which represented a compromise<sup>2</sup> between Romanism, Lutheranism and Calvinism. It abolished the doctrine of transubstantiation and demanded that everyone in the country partake of Anglican communion as a test of orthodoxy. The protestant progressives then gained a majority on the King's council and

---

1. SMITH p. 308    2. LINDSAY p. 359-60.



1

the work of reform accelerated rapidly. Between 1550 and 1553 most of what was distinctively mediaeval in catholicism vanished from England,<sup>2</sup> the mass, private confession, celibacy, anointing of the sick, the cult of the saints and so forth. In 1552 the second Prayer Book was issued along with the Forty-two Articles of Religion. The communion service was "completely de-Romanized" in the former, while the latter in the opinion of Curtis,<sup>3</sup> inclined to the reformed or Swiss rather than the Lutheran type of doctrine:

"The Articles are scarcely a system of ordered doctrine: upon many important topics they are silent; they lean theologically upon the Prayer Book or upon the Scriptures; they deal merely with topics agitating the religious world at the time, and are content simply to distinguish authorized from unauthorized doctrine, without attempting a fresh re-statement of Christian truth. Their purpose and character are manifestly polemic or apologetic rather than critical and constructive."<sup>4</sup>

These articles formed a basis for the present Thirty-nine Articles; Curtis's comment is instructive especially in the light of our discussion of the formation of the Apostle's Creed and the Creed of Nicaea. The death of Edward put an end to the reforming movement, and perhaps it was just as well for the sake of the reformation, because an unpopular government had gone beyond what was

---

1. LINDSAY p. 359-60    2. SMITH p. 313    3. CURTIS p. 853  
4. IBID p. 852.





acceptable to the doctrinal prejudices of the majority of the English people.

During the reign of Mary (1553-1552) all the anti-papal legislation of the previous two reigns was rescinded. The Queen was welcomed gladly by the people for a strong arm promised an end to civil turmoil and distress. But her advocacy of papal pretensions, her unpopular marriage with Philip of Spain, and her fanatical and cruel persecutions of protestant dissenters like Ridley, Latimer and Cranmer destroyed what following she possessed and made England a protestant nation.

Elizabeth's chief goal was a united kingdom: and her settlement of the religious question was drawn up to please both the Protestant progressive classes and the masses who were still Catholic. As time passed all classes united to support the monarch and her church against Rome and Spain; "Protestantism became almost synonymous with patriot<sup>1</sup>ism." The Queen in 1558 secured new acts of Uniformity and Supremacy from Parliament, making herself supreme governor of the church. Uniformity was enforced and her subjects were compelled to agree to a slightly revised Prayer Book and the Thirty-nine Articles, the latter formed by dropping three from



those of Edward. The new articles, like the old, were a compromise between Romanism, Lutheranism and Calvinism. They leaned toward Lutheranism in aiding a strong alliance with the throne, and toward Calvinism in the doctrine of the eucharist.

"But the final permanence of the Thirty-nine Articles was not assured for some time. Subscription to all the articles, first acquired by Convocation in 1571, was made precise in terms of the "Three Articles" of Archbishop Whitgift in 1583, to be signed by all candidates for orders and for office: (1) acknowledge the Royal Supremacy in Church as well as State; (2) promising the exclusive use of the Prayer Book accepted as in harmony with the work of God; and (3) allowing the Thirty-nine Articles, and believing them all to be agreeable to the Word of God."<sup>1</sup>

The inchoate character of Anglican theology was first given form by Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" (1594), which assured the Anglican church victory over the strong wave of Puritanism that swept England in the next century. "Owing mainly to Hooker, posterity has no need to look back upon Anglicanism as a passing phase in the history of our island Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

In subsequent years the nation proved itself both monarchist and Anglican. The Westminster Confession and the Puritan Revolt lost out with the death of

---

1. CURTIS p. 855    2. T.E.C. Ch. 11, quoted from p. 31.





Oliver Cromwell, and by 1717 the Church of England was permanently established as an arm of the state.

Convocation in that year was silenced for a period of<sup>1</sup> over a century.

### (iii) CONCLUSIONS

The evolution of the Ecclesia Anglicana was the evolution of a nationalist state and of the monarchical principle of absolute supremacy. The English reformation<sup>2</sup> was a forcible reform of the church of the state. Its reformers often preached the priesthood of believers but as Tawney says, "The conception of religion as a thing private and individual does not emerge until after a century in which religious freedom normally means the freedom of the state to prescribe religion, not the freedom of the individual to worship God as he pleases."<sup>3</sup>

In his book "Intolerance" Garrison points out that by the reformation period no formidable religious movement had been carried on without the support of the state<sup>4</sup> for more than a 1000 years. Protestantism challenged papal authority, yes, but to do so it had to have the support of a secular arm;<sup>5</sup> and as a church it did not

---

1. INGE p. 81    2. SMITH p. 288    3. TAWNEY p. 163  
4. GARRISON p. 115    5. See also Seignobos p. 230, "What saved the Reformation and made it possible for it to spread was that for forty years (from 1521 to 1559) the sovereigns in a position to crush it, the Emperor and the King of France, were almost incessantly at war with each other and at odds with the Pope."



abandon for many years the claim of absolute allegiance from the entire community under its control.

A religious dynamic pulsed throughout the whole period under discussion; but the forms of belief which were adopted as a result of it and the subservient position which the new church has continued to occupy relative to the state ever since were determined by the political and economic factors depicted in this chapter. Its theology was shaped in a 16th century setting in which religious toleration was impossible, with the result that "Erastianism was the only available substitute for the authority of the Pope and General Councils." <sup>1</sup> On the theological side, the new wine of moral and spiritual enthusiasm which has been alluded to as breaking out in the lives of the reformers and in the reformation age generally, was poured into the old bottles of mediaeval scholasticism. The reformation in England did little to alter the doctrines it retained from the church of Rome; the "good news" of Jesus was returned to the Constantinian vessel from which it came in the fourth century. And the religion of the Nazarene once again became an imperialist Christianity.

---

1. RUSSELL p. 114.



The spiritual revolt which energized the revolution sprang from men's concern for salvation: they could not believe that so corrupt an organization as the English Catholic Church possessed the means of grace. Increase in education fortified that conviction in their minds, and the rise of new political units in society caused them to turn to them as a substitute for papal authority. From then on as far as they were concerned, the commands of God were to be conveyed to men through the new medium, the State Church.





BIBLIOGRAPHY CH. VI

Reference  
Title:

- ATHOLL, Duchess of, "Searthlight on Spain", Harmondsworth, Eng., Penguin Books Ltd., 1938.
- CHESTERTON, G.K. "A Short History Of England", Chatto & Windus, 1929.
- COLLINS, R.W., "The Parish Priest and His Flock as Depicted by the Councils of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries", JOURNAL OF RELIGION, July, 1930.
- CURTIS, W.A., "Confessions", HASTINGS ENCYCLOPAEDIA Vol. iii. \*
- FLICK, A.C., "The Decline of the Medieval Church, Vol. 11 (See Ch. 1V)
- GARRISON, W.E., "Intolerance", New York, Round Table Press, Inc., 1934.
- HAYES, CJH, "A Political and Social History of Modern Europe", New York, Macmillans, 1927.
- HUNT, W., "England, Church of", ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA, 11th Ed., Vol 9. \*
- INGE, W.R., "Protestantism", London, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1935.
- LINDSAY, T.M., "A History Of The Reformation", Vol 11, New York, Scribners, 1911. \*
- LUCAS, H.S., "The Renaissance and Reformation", New York, Harpers, 1934. \*
- LATOURETTE, K.S., "A History of the Expansion of Christianity", Vol. 111 (See Ch. 111)
- MORTON, A.L., "A People's History of England", London, Gollancz, 1938.
- MARTI, A.M., "Economic Causes of the Reformation in England", New York, Macmillans, 1929. \*
- PULLAN, L., "Religion Since the Reformation", Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924.



- ROBINSON, J.H., "The Reformation", *ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA*, 11th Ed., Vol. 23. \*
- RUSSELL, B., "Power", (See Ch. 1V)
- SEIGNOBOS, C., "The Rise Of European Civilization", (See Ch. 1V)
- SMITH, P., "The Age of the Reformation", New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1920. \*
- TAWNEY, R.H., "Religion And The Rise of Capitalism", Harmondsworth, Eng., reprinted in Penguin Books Ltd., 1938. \*
- T. E. C. "Typical English Churchmen From Parker to Maurice", edited by W. E. Collins, London, S.P.C.K., 1902.
- WORKMAN, H.B., "John Wyclif, A Study Of The Medieval Church", 2 Vols., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1926. \*
- W A C E and* BUCHEIM, "Luther's Primary Works", London, translated, Hodder & Stoughton, 1896.





IMPACT OF SCIENCE ON CHRISTIAN BELIEF

"It is our pleasure that you be absolved, provided with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, in Our presence, you abjure, curse and detest, the said errors and heresies. (the sentence of the Inquisition to Galileo, 1633) 1

"Never again must there be placed about the neck of religion the millstone of dogmas enforced by external authority." (1911) 2

In the last chapter the evolution of the Anglican church was seen to be an evolution largely political in character. Doctrinal changes to the beliefs inherited from the papacy were few; and the early creeds, the decisions of the ecumenical councils and much of mediaeval philosophy were reasserted with the vigor that can inspire an honest spiritual and moral revolution. The reformers were heirs to beliefs framed in the atmosphere of Greek substance philosophy, the judicial concepts of the Romans and of feudal Europe, and the scholastic theology of the school men. These were accepted uncritically because the sixteenth century innovators were interested in practical religion, rather than its philosophy or theology. As a result religion remained static in concept; and consisted of a set of absolute beliefs, founded on an absolute biblical

---

1. Quoted by RUSSELL p.31

2. MACKINTOSH p.480



revelation, to be adhered to absolutely by church members who felt themselves to be servants of the will of an absolute God. Nobody, for example, repudiated the Copernican theory more vehemently than did Luther; truly, authoritarianism was in the saddle, and even today has not been very seriously shaken from its seat.

During the middle ages the authoritarian attitude was a necessary tool in the hands of a church occupied the extremely difficult task of educating the barbarians. In the stormy post-reformation period followers of the great reformers lacked the assurance of their leader. They needed an infallible source of revelation to set over against the infallible claims of the Catholic counter-reformation. And they found it in the bible. The essence of Christianity became at that time almost a quantitative thing, imprisoned in the pages of a book or the sentences of a creed, changeless, absolute, and requiring only the attitude of faith to complete the conditions necessary for the assurance of salvation.

Yet in this century we have discarded our belief in the metaphysical presuppositions of the Greek church as well as in the judicial formulations of the medieval,

---



Protestant and Catholic alike; the advance of scientific knowledge has altered the views, not simply of the technical philosopher, but of the average man in the street.<sup>1</sup> Any discussion of Christian belief has to deal with the question of the effect science has had on christianity. The problem invites a book, indeed a library in answer; but it has to be met, however partially. For nigh onto four hundred years the scientific method has illuminated various aspects of the nature of reality. Beliefs in the supernatural, in revealed truth, in creedal formulations about ressurection, virgin birth, second coming, the trinity, and so forth have had to stand the shock of the new methods. And beliefs in evolution, in psychological determinism and in birth control, to mention only a few, have been offered for acceptance.

Christian adjustments to this change in mental climate have been varied, and the variety of attitudes are practically all still represented in the contemporary world. From the beginning religious groups resisted attempts to lay bare the mysteries of the universe. In the sixteenth century the cosmos was considered to be sacred, so that when Galileo described

---

1. MACKINTOSH p.479





it more accurately than they were used to they felt he had passed a value judgment on the universe, thereby impugning its religious significance. Their attitude was one of condemnation. In our day man is held to be sacred, and attempts of psychology to give more adequate accounts of his behaviour detract from his inherent dignity in the opinion of many. Some people turn away from the theory of psychological determinism and continue to treat criminals and the young delinquent in terms of the religious categories of "bad" and "good", and to inflict retributory punishment upon the former. Their attitude, their adjustment to the new scientific knowledge, is to ignore it.

This chapter is devoted to an examination of the effect of science on Christianity as seen by a few glimpses of the adjustments made by Christians in the course of the development of the scientific world view from the time of Galileo. It deals with the attitudes of the ordinary Christian rather than changes in the positions of Christian philosophy.

(i ) ATTITUDES UP TO 1859

It was not until Darwin published his "Origin of Species" that the contradictions between a literal

---



interpretation of the bible and scientific method became a matter of general knowledge. Before 1859 the struggle between science and religion had centred mainly in the fields of astronomy and geology but the common man heard little about it. General education of the masses only began in the nineteenth century (see below p.10) so that there was little chance for them to hear, much less understand the issues involved in what the scientists were saying.

The adjustments of attitude, then, of religious groups before the time of Darwin were largely an affair of the religious hierarchies that governed them. In the thirteenth century there was little conflict. The Inquisition, established in 1242, was not used against scientific workers or their discoveries until Copernicus. Leonardo (1452-1519) who anticipated the fundamentals of many of our modern sciences was not molested, and other isolated workers were left in peace. But when (1543) Copernicus published his treatise on the evolution of heavenly bodies it was immediately put on the Index. And it remained there until the 19th century. In 1600 Bruno was burned in the square in Florence because he drew logical conclusions about

---





God and the universe from the book written by Copernicus.

Galileo, in whom the scientific method came finally to fruition, was forced by a papal committee to recant views which he had put forth in the fields<sup>1</sup> of astronomy, mathematics and physics. His discoveries conflicted with the geocentric theory of the universe espoused by the church and everyone else in that day. From this time forward the Inquisition was used very extensively to suppress scientific views held to be dangerous to the faith. With the coming of Newton (1642) and his successors forceful coercion of scientists disappeared.

Christian groups argued that truth about the nature of the universe was to be determined by appeal to church authority and to the bible, rather than by the new method of observation and experiment. The prize example of this attitude is the famous statement of Dr. John Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, which he uttered towards the end of the 17th century, - that the creation of the world "took

---

1. See RUSSELL p.26-35, for an account of Galileo's trial.



place, and man was created by the Trinity on  
October 23rd 4004 B.C. at 9.00 o'clock in the morning." <sup>1</sup>  
Both Protestants and Catholics believed that any  
explanation which ran counter to the bible came from  
the devil and had to be eradicated. Geology,  
geography, zoology and biology were written in terms  
of allusions in scripture. A contemporary of Dr.  
Lightfoot's, Professor Kirchmaur of the University of  
Wittenburg said, "Who would not feat to deny the  
existence of the unicorn since Holy Scripture names  
him with such distinct praise." <sup>2</sup>

Meteorological phenomena were explained as due  
to the activity of evil spirits, as were witchcraft,  
and certain forms of both mental and physical disease.  
For example, an earthquake occuring in America in 1755  
was widely attributed to Benjamin Franklin's new inven-  
tion, the lightning rod. White writes:

"The Rev. Thomas Prince, pastor of the Old South  
Church, published a sermon on the subject, and  
the appendix expressed the opinion that the  
frequency of earthquakes may be due to the  
erection of 'iron points invented by the  
sagacious Mr. Franklin. He goes on to argue  
that 'in Boston are more erected than anywhere  
else in New England, and Boston seems to be  
more dreadfully shaken. Oh! There is no getting  
out of the might hand of God!"

---

1. WHITE p.9

2. IBID p.39

3. As late as 1878 John Wesley is quoted as stating  
that "the giving up of witchcraft is, in effect the  
giving up of the Bible."



Franklin made his discovery in 1752 but approximately twenty years were to elapse before the churches in Europe and America substituted lightning rods for the stone angels, bones, holy water, sealed relics, exorcisms, processions, witch-burnings and other means then in vogue for the warding off of the dreaded lightning which struck so often and caused such immense loss of property.

Praying for rain is a modern survival of this kind of attitude. Organised witch hunts persisted into the 19th century and fear of inoculation and other medical treatments into the present one. Many religious people up until the Darwinian controversy simply refused to consider the results of scientific research, preferring to use the methods of God to cure the maladies sent by God.

Although the churches did not use force to ensure allegiance to their own explanations, they did so use their very considerable influence over their membership, and through them over the life of their communities, that it was only gradually that the superstitious beliefs of the average person were disturbed





by the light of science. Europe was completely dominated by the Catholic church for a 1000 years; and as far as science was concerned the reformation just changed the seat of authority, not the nature of it. Few, even among the educated, were required to adjust their religious beliefs. There was a small group of emancipated individuals, most of them remaining nominal Christians; and there was another group becoming increasingly concerned about the social welfare of society. But the majority of the latter were governed usually by as superstitious a set of beliefs as the orthodox.<sup>1</sup> Authoritarianism reigned supreme.

(ii) ENGLAND: 1859-1914.

In the years 1859 and 1860 two bombshells were dropped into the stronghold of authoritarianism. Jowett laid down the thesis, "Interpret the Bible like any other book."<sup>2</sup> And Darwin brought forward incontrovertible proof that men should be studied like any other biological form of life. The storm raised was immediate and bitter. Professors were dismissed; personalities engaged in: legal proceedings instituted;

---

1. JENKINS p.491-2, Mrs. Colenso reported that F.D. Maurice had (in 1835) said "that if he could not believe that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, he could not believe in God at all or in the power of the world to come."

2. JOWETT, Essay IV.



excommunications pronounced; and two hundred thousand dollars for the building of Keble College, Oxford, was raised on the strength of the reaction of good Christian people against these propositions.

They felt that the bible was robbed of its unique quality if its literal truth was disproven; and that man was deprived of his full stature as a son of God if he was shown to be no higher than the other animals. But why this violent reaction against Darwin's theory? The answer lies in the spread of education which Tawney<sup>1</sup> says reached a peak in the 19th century. Darwin's book was written in words all educated men could understand. Lyell had demonstrated the effect of natural forces in the geological world, and above all, men and women were able to read and comprehend the issues involved.<sup>2</sup> The following citations from Robinson illustrate the development that took place in education:

"When Burke appealed, in 1792, to the 'free and enlightened' people of England to take up arms against the French Revolution, by far the greater part of the population could not write or read..... and when Samuel Whitbread proposed to Parliament

---

1. See Chapter 6, p.--

2. KINGSTON p. 52





in 1807 that parish schools should be supported at public expense he was met by the objection that giving education to the working classes would be 'found prejudicial to their morals and their happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life instead of making them good servants.....it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity; it would render them insolent to their superiors'.....

In 1843 thirty-two per cent of the men and forty-nine per cent of the women had to sign their names in the marriage register with a cross. In 1903 only two per cent of the men and three per cent of the women could not write their names in the registrar." 1

The leaven of literacy had spread throughout the population, and it had the effect of bringing all discussion of religious matters into the public forum, and before an audience much larger than the one that witnessed the sixteenth century arguments of the reformers. For the first time the man in the street had an opportunity to make up his own mind, make his own adjustment. And like all beginnings it frequently was a fairly rudimentary, rather crude adjustment that resulted; which accounts for vigor with which Darwin's thesis was debated.

Mathew Arnold imputes the religious disturbance of the time not only the fact that "the old anthropomorphic and miraculous religion no longer reaches



and rules the masses as it once did," but to "the grossness of perception and materializing habits of the popular mind."<sup>1</sup> He quotes in another place from a letter which he had received from a working-man:

"Despite the efforts of the churches the speculations of the day are working their way down among the people, many of whom are asking for the REASON and AUTHORITY for the things they have been taught to believe. Questions of this kind, too, mostly reach them through doubtful channels; and owing to this, and to their lack of culture, a discovery of imperfection and fallibility in the Bible leads to its contemptuous rejection as a great priestly imposture."<sup>2</sup>

And he might well have added, "Among the orthodox the accusation of imperfection or fallibility is tantamount to an accusation of imposture." It was a case of a little learning proving to be a dangerous thing. The important role of education in the formation of Christian belief was seen in the reformation period and is apparent today also when we are experiencing the gradual spread of the empirical temper among the general masses of mankind.

In the intellectual world the controversy was soon over. By the time Darwin published "The Descent of Man" in which he made his views about humanity more

---

1. ARNOLD p.94

2. ARNOLD 2 p. VII



<sup>1</sup>  
explicit, the whole doctrine of evolution had been  
accepted by distinguished men the world over and was  
open to frank discussion even when applied to the  
most sacred elements of man's life.<sup>2</sup> But the masses  
for years to come championed the position taken by  
Bishop Wilberforce in his celebrated taunt delivered  
against Huxley at the British Association meeting in  
Oxford in 1860; "I should like to ask Professor Huxley  
is it on his grandfather's or his grandmother's side  
that the ape ancestry comes in?"<sup>3</sup>

There was great confusion produced in the average  
mind because some argued against the mechanism of  
evolution which Darwin had advanced, namely natural  
selection, and others contested the validity of the  
general concept itself. When that confusion cleared  
and men recognized the evolutionary idea did not  
necessarily militate against belief in God, two types  
of adjustment emerged.

---

1. DARWIN 2 p. 797, "Man with all his noble qualities... still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin....he is descended from some lowly organized form."

2. KINGSTON p. 101

3. IBID, quoted on p. 72.





On the one hand large groups of people, whom in America have been called fundamentalists, combined with Gladstone and the Roman Catholic church to deny<sup>1</sup> the validity of the evolutionary view. Their position will be outlined more specifically when, in the next section, the American reaction to scientific views is described.

On the other hand large sections of orthodox Christians followed the lead of Huxley, Arnold and Darwin himself, and began to restate their religious convictions in terms of the new natural science and biblical criticism. Huxley's restatement was an agnostic one but like Darwin he argued that there was no reason why science should be thought to rob life of its religious meaning. Darwin's comments on the subject are few, but enlightening:

"I see no good reason why (my) views should shock the religious feelings of any one.... To my mind it accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator, that the production and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world should have been due to secondary causes, like those determining the birth and death of the individual..... natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being....

---

1. C.E. Vol. 8, p.48; 10, p.48 for Papal Encyclicals.



There is grandeur in this view of life.....  
that from so simple a beginning endless forms  
most beautiful and most wonderful have been  
and are being evolved.....The fact that  
man has risen.....to the very summit of the  
organic scale, instead of having been  
aboriginally placed there, may give him  
hope for a still higher destiny in the distant  
future."<sup>1</sup>

Some Christians accepted Darwin's concepts and also  
Matthew Arnold's view that authoritarianism must be  
forgotten in reading the bible because the only  
criterion for truth and for revelation was in ex-  
<sup>2</sup>perience not in dogma. Armed with these two ideas  
they fashioned various restatements of theological  
truth, and did it so well from the standpoint of the  
scientists that even T. H. Huxley expressed his  
satisfaction with their attitude which he found  
represented in the speeches of three bishops at the  
meeting of the British Association in 1887.<sup>3</sup> As a  
matter of fact by this time many of the theologians,  
whose radical views had incurred the wrath of their  
superiors twenty years before, now occupied some of  
the highest posts in the church and theological  
colleges.

- 
1. DARWIN p. 304, 315-16, DARWIN 2 p.797
  2. ARNOLD p.303 f., ARNOLD 2 p.106, "The natural  
experimental truth of his (Jesus') explanations is  
their one claim upon us; but this claim is enough."
  3. HUXLEY p. 236





Two main types of reformulation became popular.<sup>1</sup>  
The one accepted the findings of science as valid within its own domain, but held that the laws of the spiritual life were not the laws of biology, but the "laws of a deepening friendship."<sup>2</sup> In other words, ultimate questions were beyond the comprehension of science; this was a Ristichlian separation of fact and value which a second group of theologians who had widespread influence among the masses did not think was necessary. Their approach was exemplified in the writings of men like Henry Drummond and F. R. Tennant who, "believing that natural and spiritual laws were finally identical were prepared not only to take their account of the former from contemporary science, but to say that ' the latter were to be interpreted by the former.'<sup>3</sup>"

Of course such an acceptance of scientific knowledge and scientific method did not necessarily mean the creeds would be changed. And as a matter of fact

---

1. As early as 1860 and 1863 men as different in temperament as Kingsley and Hort expressed their general agreement with and deep appreciation for, Darwin's work. (DARWIN p.304, JACKSON p.189)

2. C. T. C. p. 97

3. IBID p. 100; notice the titles of two of Drummond's books: "The Ascent Of Man" (1902), and "Natural Law In The Spiritual World (1884)



they remained the same; but the scientific approach found its way into the church through the medium of religious education, preaching and other organizational activities. At this point the "Social Gospel" became popular and the struggle with science became a secondary issue, especially as a modus vivendi had been achieved and the new social concern was itself based on the hope Darwin expressed, when he said that the fact man had risen from the past meant he might rise higher in the future. The new passion for a social Christianity occupied itself in arousing the sympathies of church members for action, and there was little suggestion of scientifically grounded procedures, or the planning of such, that might be undertaken. While this weakness was not by any means confined to the church, it is evidence that although the outlook of church people had been profoundly modified by the rise of evolutionary science, they had not actually grasped the significance of what they were accepting.

As stated above, science scarcely touched the creeds except to force them into the background of the life of most church people. It required the development of a group of scientifically trained men



within Christianity before official statements began to be issued on matters pertaining to education, crime, marriage, economics and so forth that took account of the new findings of organized science. Since the first Great War statements of that kind have been appearing with increasing frequency, one of the latest being the pronouncement of the Methodist and Anglican churches in England which admitted birth control to be necessary and efficacious measure for the conduct of Christian married life. Up until recently the bible and the creeds were considered to be sufficient guide for the conduct of life; science has changed all that and now the creeds may undergo a change.

The Modernist controversy in the Roman Catholic church is illuminating on the question of ecumenism. For Fundamentalism and many Protestant divisions developed from it. The year 1907 was the stormiest year<sup>1</sup> of the century, theologically speaking. R. J. Campbell, congregational minister of City Temple, London was attacked from all sides and excluded from the National Free Church Council for his radical views--a compound of the immanentism of the absolute idealists, the social

---

1. HORTON p. 30, Cf. Papal Encyclical "Pascendi" (Sabatier p. 148) and Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. X, p.415F.





gospel of Maurice and the critical spirit of science.<sup>1</sup>

His "New Theology" was the religion of science":

"The denial that there is, or ever has been, or ever can be, any dissonance between science and religion; it is the recognition that upon the foundations laid by modern science a vaster and nobler fabric of faith is rising than that world has ever known before. Science is supplying the facts which the New Theology is weaving into the texture of religious experience." 2

Like his Roman Catholic comrade of the spirit, Father Tyerell, Campbell could say that his "imagination was  
3  
quite cured of the outside God." Such pre-war liberalism and evolutionary optimism was the adjustment which sincere Christians made on the basis of a rather shallow appraisal of the results of scientific investigation. Even before the war broke out there was a sharp reaction gathering in Christian intellectualist circles against this type of extreme immanentism and excessive optimism.<sup>4</sup> Campbell mirrors that trend in his own life; for he soon came, under the influence of Bergson, Eucken and Von Hugel, to distrust his own

---

1. CAMPBELL Ch. I

2. IBID p. 15

3. HORTON, quoted on p. 33.

4. IBID p. 43f, for example, "Biology is not theology, nor can God be defined in terms of 'life' or 'progress'... the DIVINE is not LIFE at its intensest. It contains in a way an almost ANTI-VITAL element..."(quoted from T. E. Hulme's 'Speculations')".



previous position and to see that "we could have life<sup>1</sup> without embodiment in such a world as ours." Campbell called back his "New Theology" from circulation as far as possible and in 1916 was reordained into the Church of England.

The attempt to make a religion of science or of philosophy or of a social ideal was not by any means confined to England. The same thing happened on the Continent and in America. The next section deals with the latter, and something about the German and Swiss reactions will be given in a subsequent chapter.

As for England, the coming of Darwin resulted in defections from the church, and in several different kinds of adjustments by religious people; fundamentalism, on the one extreme and the religion of science on the other. These two and many mediating positions continue<sup>2</sup> to live today.

(iii) THE UNITED STATES: 1859-1940.

What happened in England took place in America about twenty or thirty years later, and followed a somewhat different course due largely to the growth of the organized fundamentalist movement. In 1891 Union

---

1. IBID p. 42

2. f. LAMBETH p.114, where the Anglican basis for union is outlined. It includes four points: the Bible, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion and the Episcopacy.





Theological Seminary withdrew from the Presbyterian Church as a result of a controversy over the modernist views of its Professor Briggs; and from that year until 1907 various ministers and professors were suspended from several of the churches for reasons asking to those which had provoked like action in England about thirty years before. From then on the same kinds of adjustment as in England developed.<sup>1</sup>

Fundamentalism in its organized form is an American product and a by-product of Roman Catholic Modernism. The significance of general educational facilities for the form of religious belief is again illustrated for fundamentalism is rooted in the Moody revivals of the latter part of the 19th century, the American Bible League and the Bible Schools which grew out of them. In the United States education and religion were established as joint projects on the frontier, and even after the former was secularized

---

1. e.y. HODGE p.15, in 1871 Dr. Hodge of Princeton wrote, "God has revealed his existence and his government of the world so clearly that any philosophical or scientific speculations inconsistent with these truths are like cobwebs in the track of a tornado." However even Dr. Hodge also saw that evolution could be interpreted from a theistic standpoint and he anticipated the conclusion of Dr. W. N. Clarke of Colgate University who in 1894 said, "In general, God's method in the universe is evolutionary." (CLARKE p.131).



the wide scope of the sunday-school movement kept the bulk of the religious population well grounded in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> The basic doctrines which Moody and his schools affirmed, and which were for them the source of authority in all matters, were: the infallibility of the bible; the virgin birth; the complete deity, resurrection, substitutionary atonement and second coming of Jesus.

As science progressed and men demanded that authority be transferred to the realm of empirically verified truth, the millions who had come to believe these fundamentals organized in an aggressive campaign to maintain them. Like the papal committee which tried Galileo, and the Inquisition which the church used in the centuries following him, the goal of these twentieth century Americans was to keep the new beliefs from entering people's minds. A series of books, entitled "The Fundamentals" was published and circulated to the number of three million. In 1909 the movement was organized nationally and internationally with the avowed object of driving modernism from the

---

1. BONN p.279 and the democratic educational system of America explains the powerful effect produced by Darwin's theory of Evolution; it made it accessible, in a simplified form, within a comparatively short space of time, to large classes of the population.





churches and prohibiting the teaching of evolution in the schools. It gained supporters by the scores of millions and succeeded in having laws proscribing the teaching of evolution placed on the statute books of four state legislatures. Resolutions embodying the same aim were seriously considered in certain state legislatures as late as 1927. The rise of psychology after the war intensified the struggle, as may be imagined from the title of a sermon preached by Harry Emerson Fosdick in 1922, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" But by the time of the Scopes case in 1925 the movement had reached its zenith; and today there are representatives of both fundamentalism and modernism in practically every congregation.

The fundamentalists simply deny the validity of scientific explanation altogether;<sup>1</sup> however, although their attitude is a very prevalent one on the North American continent there are large numbers who have made other kinds of adjustments. It will be valueable to consider what portions of traditional belief have

---

1. CAMPBELL 2, Introd., "(the author) seeks first of all to vindicate the historical accuracy of the Bible.... and lastly he exposes the unscientific character of the evolutionary theory of the universe and ridicules the variant attempts of the evolutionary philosophers to account for the Creation, especially when contrasted with the grand and simple Word of God." Cf. also BRYAN'S article "Is the Bible Infallible? Yes!" written in 1926.





been discarded, or pushed aside, by the modernist or liberal Christian in America; in that way some foreknowledge of the effect of science on American Christianity may be gained.

Perhaps the most formidable change in religious thought since the reformation is contained in the idea that religion itself changes. Once admit that concept and authoritarianism collapses; every doctrine and belief must be subject to the glaring light of new facts, new interpretations, and what to the pre-authoritarian Christians was inconceivable, new revelations of the grace and mercy of God himself. The evolutionary hypothesis does exactly that. The most important beliefs which science has modified are the infallibility of the bible, concept of the supernatural, the idea of finality ~~in~~ religious doctrine, the importance of metaphysics, the doctrine of God, and the place of Jesus Christ. The brief account of those that follow is based on Smith's impressions written in 1927; the trend of theological thinking since that time makes his article even more interesting, but it is safe to say that the revolution in thought which seemed so certain to him in the academic world of that day is now in process in the average man's world at the present moment. Whatever else is happening to



American Christianity today the chastening influence of science is certainly being widely felt.

The first belief to be considered is that of the infallibility of the bible. Theology for centuries claimed to set forth divinely authorized truths whose source, especially for protestants, was the bible. Modern biblical scholarship rendered this idea of the bible untenable. It had to be treated like any other book. Modernists at first tried to demonstrate that their theology was still scriptural, but they at once realized that it was their own individual reading of scripture upon which they were their own individual theology. Thus they abandoned that approach and said that the "important matter is to understand how religion<sup>1</sup> functions in life, rather than to canonize a literature." Modernists study religion, not biblical texts, and for them the uniqueness of the bible consists in the "ideals it presents, the inspiration which it furnishes, the direct contact into which it introduces us with God and with the spirits of the great men of the past who have lived in daily communion with him."<sup>2</sup> The authority of the bible as infallible is replaced by an authority which is self-attesting, the religious

---

1. SMITH p.102

2. BROWN p.15





experience and principles for everyday living which scripture reveals.

Again, the old idea of authority was dependent upon a doctrine of the supernatural. The supernatural was a realm utterly different from our own; and miracles and fulfillment of prophecy were considered to be evidences of incursions of the supernatural into the natural. Science has discredited both of these, with the result "that it would make almost no difference to the content of much modern theology if the whole<sup>1</sup> problem of the miraculous were ignored." Nature and the supernatural are not two different kinds of reality, but two different aspects of one and the same reality,<sup>2</sup> "Man himself partakes of the nature of both." God works through scientific laws; the supernatural is expressed through the natural and there cannot therefore be any dogmatic pretensions of absolute certainty about man's testimony to the reality of God in his life. "The<sup>3</sup> supernatural is natural."

Another commonly held dogma of religion is that religious beliefs are "absolute" and "final", because given to men by God. But science and history force us to admit that all forms of religion are relative and capable of improvement. Christianity is a movement made up of fallible human beings who devise the best



modes of action and sets of belief they can discover under given sets of circumstances. Past tradition has its value but hardly constitutes the elements for a doctrine of absoluteness. Fundamentalist and modernist quarrel violently over this, for the former anchors himself in tradition while the latter seeks new beliefs suited to a scientific age.

"There is a distinct tendency to reduce the<sup>1</sup> content of theology." Problems of eschatology, of the trinity, of election of the birth of Jesus have become as purely speculative to the modern man as the doctrine of angels. Sin is rapidly becoming a sociological and psychological, rather than a metaphysical fact.

"The decisive event in the spiritual life of America<sup>2</sup> in the last twenty years has been the eclipse of hell." When experience becomes the source of convictions, metaphysics becomes less important than at any time in the history of Christianity. This can be directly traced to the fact that science has replaced theology and philosophy as the accepted background for living, the zeitgeist.

Philosophical speculation about the place and nature of Jesus has also yielded to the scientific spirit. The life of Jesus has become the norm of

---

1. SMITH p. 107

2. BONN p.281



theology and the doctrines of the atonement merely the religious notions of various theologians of the past. "Calvary is a principle as well as an event."<sup>1</sup> Jesus' divinity consists in a quality of life, of relationship to God for which we should all strive: "he is not God and man, but God in man, the first-born among many brethren, but the type to which all mankind is ultimately destined to conform."<sup>2</sup> It is not Jesus' life which is normative, but his spirit which we too may catch.

Lastly, the concept of God has been modified by scientific progress. When evolution was accepted theologians argued that God worked through the laws of progress to effect his will; they retained the ancient Greek and scholastic idea of God as an essence, almost a quantitative something in and behind the laws. The fundamentalists were shrewder and franker; they refused to accept the new scientific concept because they saw that finally it meant the rejection of the old concept of God found in the bible and the creeds. The tendency among modernists is to seek a formula, a statement about God which shall be related to our scientifically construed universe, rather than to the theologically or philosophically<sup>3</sup> construed universes of the past.

---

1. BROWN p.15

2. IBID op. cit.

3. SMITH p. 114





God is defined simple as the "unconditioned" and the metaphysics written to delineate the meaning of that term is more and more scientific in character.

Countless other illustrations of the influence of science on religion could be adduced; the whole realm of ethics has been omitted from discussion for example, and in many respects as Dean Inge, I believe it was, once said, ethics is the present battleground on which the christian and non-christian forces are engaging in conflict. We await some new Copernicus who will do for psychology and sociology what Copernicus did for astronomy. Then the warfare will break out anew.

And the warfare is caused in our machine age by the same problem that beset the minds of the reformers, and the scholastics and the church fathers, and the disciples. Namely, the problem of how to live, of how to win a gracious God, of how to be sure of salvation. It was because science opened such vast corridors of new life that men at first surged forward joyfully thinking that here at last was the absolute key to living. And it was because men had deserted their old authorities for that of science, and found it barren, that they are turning again in the Barthian movement and the sects in America back to the reformation way of salvation. For many of the former group their sole



bond of sympathy had been antagonism to traditionalism, and it was in the nature of the case that they should fail in what they sought. Mere antagonism is as poor a medicine for religious peace as the beliefs of the antiquarian. No, as Mackintosh pointed out many years ago, twentieth century christians have to do what Athanasius and Anselm did, "frame an orthodoxy for the<sup>1</sup> times."

Signs are not lacking that many American religious leaders are doing the necessary thinking and experimenting which shall issue in a scientific orthodoxy for the scientific times which lie ahead. The main results of science in American Christianity have been a growth of a liberal spirit in search of that kind of an orthodoxy, a sharp reaction against that growth, and the slow, underground and as yet unheard from spread of the empirical frame of mind among the masses of the American people. Education in the United States is no longer humanistic; it is scientific, and as its civilization passes into the new phase, the scientific, Christian truth must be restated in contemporary terminology in use. The old framework of Christianity belonged to the





classic, or humanistic phase of civilization; the new will belong to the scientific. To take just one example: assurance of salvation will no longer spring from a dogma, a book, or a doctrine but from life.

In an age when everyone will know that not even a chemical law is absolutely certain, we "will learn that Jesus' method of knowing by perceivable fruits in the ever-flowing stream of life, as men live it from day to day, is actually identical with the experimental method of our most highly developed modern sciences."<sup>1</sup>

---

1. NELSON p. 401; see also Horton 2 p.6, INGE p.145, INGE 2.



BIBLIOGRAPHY CH. 7.

Reference  
Title.

- ARNOLD, M., "Literature and Dogma," New York, Macmillan, 1914. (1873). \*
- ARNOLD 2, M, "Preface To Last Essays On Church And Religion," 1877, from "Representative Essays Of Matthew Arnold," by E. K. Brown, Toronto, Macmillan's, 1936. \*
- BONN, M. J., "The American Adventure," translation, New York, John Day Company, 1934 (1930).
- BROWN, W. A., "The Old Theology and The New," Harvard Theological Review, January, 1911.\*
- BRYAN, W. J., "Is The Bible Infallible? Yes.", Christian Work, February 14, 1925. \*
- CAMPBELL, R. J., "The New Theology," London, Chapman & Hall, 1907. \*
- CAMPBELL 2, J. L., "The Bible Under Fire," Jefferson City, Harper's, 1928.
- C. T. C., "The Church Through Half A Century," a symposium with articles by Walter Horton on "Science and Theology," J. S. Bixler on "The Philosophy of Religion," and J. H. Branscomb on "Biblical Criticism," New York, Scribners, 1936. \*
- CLARKE, W. N., "An Outline of Christian Theology," New York, Scribners, 1912.
- DARWIN, "Origin of Species," New York, Colliers, 6th Ed., 1872.
- DARWIN 2, "Descent Of Man," New York Colliers, 1902 Ed.
- HODGE, C., "Systematic Theology," Vol. 11., London, T. Nelson & Sons, 1872.
- HORTON, W. M., "Contemporary English Theology," New York, Harpers, 1936.
- HORTON 2, W. M., "A Psychological Approach To Theology", New York, Harpers, 1931.



- INGE, W. R., "Protestantism," (See Ch. 6).
- INGE 2, W. R., "Christianity in a Scientific Age,"  
Christian Work, April 25, 1925. \*
- JACKSON, C., "Guileless Workmanship," Dalhousie  
Review, November 1932.
- JENKINS, P. C., "The Centenary Of F. D. Maurice,"  
Review of the Churches, October 1929.
- KINGSTON, R. W. G., "Darwin," London, Ducworth, 1934.\*
- KIRKPATRICK, C., "Religion In Human Affairs," New York,  
J. Wiley & Son, 1929.
- LAMBETH, "Lambeth Conference," 1930, New York,  
Macmillan.
- MACKINTOSH, D. C., "The Idea of Modern Orthodoxy,"  
Harvard Theological Review, October, 1911.\*
- NELSON, R. W., "The Supernatural is Natural,"  
(See Ch. 1.)
- ROBINSON, J. H., "The Development of Modern Europe,"  
Vol. 11, Boston, Ginn & Co., 1918.
- RUSSELL, B., "The Scientific Outlook," London,  
G. Allen & Unwin, 1931.
- SMITH, C. B., "Religious Thought in the Last  
Quarter Century," 1927. \*
- WHITE, A. D., "The Warfare Of Science With \*  
Theology," 2 Vols., New York, Appleton, 1907.











**B29747**



University of Alberta Library



0 1620 3071270 5

# For Reference

---

**NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM**

---

# For Reference

---

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

Ex LIBRIS  
UNIVERSITATIS  
ALBERTAENSIS







"A STUDY IN ECUMENISM"

VOLUME TWO





is  
0  
5.1.2

CHAPTER VIII.

BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM.

"We go to practise the positive part of church reformation and propagate the gospel in America."<sup>1</sup>  
(Cotton Mather).

"The Government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion."<sup>2</sup>  
(George Washington).

Charles A. Beard's account of American civilization, like most American histories, yields an impression of the vastness, potentiality, and at the same time newness of all things American. Within this sprawling mass of undifferentiated nationhood a new culture is in the making. America is unique in that it began its course without despising or destroying the accomplishments of the civilization from which it sprang. At an early age it received the values of past cultures, and from the beginning has inhabited the most favorable scientific and technological environment known to man. Figuratively speaking, the United States is scarcely out of its teens. Thus it is now ready to launch itself forth into new experiments in human living, bearing with it the heritage of all past accomplishment, and at the same time free from the tradition-ridden

---

1. BACON p.91 (Quoted from "Magnali Christi Americani," Mather 1702)

2. BEARD quoted I:439



attitude of its older contemporaries.

It is frequently said that America is a product of the union of European culture with the wilderness. Only at the turn of the present century did it grow out of childhood; the colonizing period was at an end and the new nation could settle down and begin to drive its cultural roots into the soil. Adolescence, to continue the metaphor, may be thought of as culminating in the naive attitudes exemplified by the Scopes trial in Tennessee. The 1929 depression brought the American "wild-oats-sowing" era to a close, for the economic problems disclosed then and in subsequent years have exercised a very sobering effect upon its development. At the present moment the gradual integration of various racial, cultural and religious elements in its makeup; the consciousness of a pressing need for intelligent self-appraisal and planned administration in the face of economic crisis; and increasing recognition of the responsibilities of nationhood - all are marks of America's "coming of age."

The process of "coming of age" has left indelible marks on American Christianity, and possibly is largely responsible for those characteristics that European theologians are unable to understand. The period of





cultural maturity upon which the nation is now embarking will doubtless have an even greater effect on religion for it is a safe prophecy that the United States is developing a "soul" to express. Consideration of this whole subject is, for the purpose of this essay, limited to a review of the major historical factors that have operated to give American Christianity its specifically New World features. Roughly, these forces may be classified under four headings: (1) Separation of Church and State; (2) Democracy and Individualism; (3) Economic Abundance; (4) The Puritan Spirit.

(i) SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

The characteristically Old World indentification of religion and politics, described in preceding chapters, was replaced in the New World by an equally characteristic separation, a separation that did not take place until years afterwards in many of the European countries. The reasons for the change were both political and religious.

The New England states were settled by men driven by a combination of religious and economic motives. Among the former the Puritan dominated. Erastianism in England had meant that a large group of middle-class Calvinists were deprived of their voice in parliament as well as in the state church, under Charles I.



Some of them raised the standard of revolt, and others migrated, not to<sub>1</sub> set up a new church, for they were not Separatists, but to establish the true reformed church. Along with certain Independents who had reached Plymouth by way of Holland they founded the Congregational system of church government often estimated to be the seminal source of American democracy. Their original intent was an absolute theocracy, but the forces at work in the new country soon defeated them in that purpose.

Meanwhile in Virginia a weak Anglican established church struggled against the debilitating effects of frontier life. In Pennsylvania, scene of William Penn's "Holy Experiment", the Quakers granted religious toleration and sects of every kind flocked to the state. In Maryland a Catholic governor granted religious freedom to his predominantly Protestant subjects. Dutch Reformed and Anglican churches struggled with one another in New York, while New Jersey and Rhode Island were settled by Quaker, Independent and Baptist exiles from the stern Massachusetts regime. Scotch Presbyterians who had

---

1. WIRTENBAKER p. 89, "They did not separate from the Church of England, nor from the ordinances of God there, but only from the corruptions and disorders of that Church; they came away from the Common Prayer and Ceremonies." (Mather)



migrated to Connecticut and Pennsylvania, by way of Ireland, and who left behind them a strongly organized national Kirk, soon clashed with the English Calvinists who clung fiercely to their hard won Congregational independence, forbidden them by the dominant State-Church in the homeland.

Led by the radical example of Rhode Island's<sup>1</sup> Roger Williams, religious toleration was practised in the Carolinas, Maryland and Pennsylvania. But even in these states dominant religious groups possessed economic and political privileges that could not but rankle in the hearts of members of a society in which free land, high wages and easy advancement made every one a potential member of the financial aristocracy. Only four years after the Massachusetts theocracy was founded it failed in its attempts to enforce the will of the religious majority upon the protesting conscience of minorities by means of public authority, and the government was changed, in form at least, from a narrow<sup>2</sup> oligarchy to a little republic. As time passed the same change was made in the other colonies also.

---

1. In his magnum opus, "The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience", Williams enunciates the principles of complete religious toleration extended even to non-Christians! (GARRISON p.176)

2. WINTENBAKER p. 97





Another factor that made for separation of Church and State was the "Great Awakening" of the first half of the 18th century. Inspired by the genius of Edwards, Whitfield and others a series of violent revival meetings was conducted in the colonies which not only aroused the people to the values of religion but caused division in organized denominations, and sent the more evangelical of their number on ardent proselytizing campaigns that were to persist throughout the entire frontier period in American history:

"The effect of this vigorous propaganda of rival sects openly, in the face of whatever there was of church establishment, settled this point: that the law of the American States, by whomsoever administered must sooner or later be the law of liberty and equality among the various religious communions."<sup>1</sup>

While the ferment of settlement, struggle and growth which was to become Colonial America in later history texts was going on other influence of a world-wide scope made themselves felt. When the first Americans left England, in the 17th century, the clergy still ruled the intellectual life of Europe:

---

1. BACON p.174



"Everywhere, except among the Quakers, who had no clerical estate, preachers, with their passionate interest in dogma, in theology and in dominion over the minds of laymen, stood at the gates of knowledge with flaming swords."<sup>1</sup>

But by the time of the Declaration of Independence the supremacy of the bible, and of the theologians, had given way before the rise of bourgeoisie secular interests bent on personal enrichment. America, from one standpoint, is the story of the lifting of great masses of lower middle class people, accustomed to existence on a mere pittance, to the status of free and comfortable citizens of a free and comfortable land. And no system of theology could keep them from following pursuits that led to such ends.

Along with the rise of the middle classes to opulence and power went the development of natural science and invention, the press and newspaper, education, and democratic political theories stemming from the doctrines of John Locke. Before this flood of new knowledge, and a class of men with the leisure to acquire it, theology was doomed as Queen of the sciences and ruler of men. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson joined with countless kindred spirits in

---

1. BEARD I:146





advocating the Deism at that time popular in Europe, while in the rush and scramble of settlement the majority were without direct contact with a church of any kind.

All these factors - the variety of aggressive denominations, the natural freedom of the frontier, the growth of secularism, the rise of a new middle class, and the demand for toleration- combined to exert an influence that finally issued in the statement of the First Amendment to the Constitution (1791): "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."<sup>1</sup>

Since then the rights acquired under the First Amendment have been jealously guarded.<sup>2</sup> Separation of Church and State has placed American Christianity in a basically different setting than that of her sister churches in Europe. American churches do not fear government restriction or persecution. They support themselves by voluntary contributions, a fact which

---

1. BEARD p.439, BACON p.175, remarks, "There was not even to be one generally predominating organization from which minor ones should be reckoned as dissenting." That was the radical, the astonishing thing at the time!

2. Compare the controversy now taking place in the columns of the CHRISTIAN CENTURY and American papers generally over President Roosevelt's appointment of a personal representative to the Vatican; an act regarded as flagrantly "Un-American"!



has influenced their practise and theory. In America, as nowhere else individual theologians have been freed from excessive veneration of past tradition to develop and experiment with new ideas of religion, and to submit them to the test of experience in the lives of thousands of their fellow citizens.

Because of the First Amendment, Christianity was, in the United States, left to appeal to the people solely on its own merits. This had a lasting effect on the character of American Christianity. It had to learn to cater to experience and to shape its theology and preaching to the experience of the people with whom it dealt. Those who clung obstinately to traditional methods and creeds were left behind in the eager rush to secure for one's own denomination a good foothold in each successive area of frontier that was opened up. The Methodists and Baptists, to take but one example, discovered that the gospel of love was not sufficient to tame the rude instincts of the frontiersmen, but that a gospel of hell-fire was what they preached! Conversion en masse, by governmental decree, that had been common in Europe, was replaced in the New<sup>1</sup> World by the mass movements of American revivalism.

---

1. SWEET p. 384-7, "Europe, church membership was almost co-extensive with citizenship.....the method of continuous revivalism arose out of the urge to find some way of winning the large unchurched element of the New World to the Christian life."



And ever since 1791 Christians have sought new techniques for the conversion of the countless thousands who stand outside the community of Christian influence. The result is that the American Christian knows his New Testament more thoroughly than his creeds, and thinks in terms of individual churches rather than "the church"--for he can point in his own short history to the very human establishment of diverse denominations of Christian believers.

(ii) DEMOCRACY AND INDIVIDUALISM.

The story of American democracy has been told on too many occasions to warrant its inclusion here. The Puritan theocracy of New England vanished before the demands of the disenfranchised for representative government. The seeds of democracy had been sown in their own belief that men could disagree with the theological authority of the homeland, and it was only a step from that to the idea of political freedom of conscience in the colonies. The aristocrats and clergy gave up their control of the franchise, and republicanism was set up. One factor which made the latter inevitable was that free men earning relatively high wages composed the majority of New England's population. A democracy





of labor made a political democracy unavoidable.

The Constitution, Tom Paine's "Rights Of Man", the Quaker and Calvinist doctrine that each man had an inalienable right to direct access to God, and the effect of the frontier in giving every one a chance to carve his own home out of the wilderness - all helped to stamp the democratic habit of thinking deep into the American Character.<sup>1</sup>

Jeffersonian democracy (1787) blossomed nearly half a century later in the rush to power of Jackson's mob of farmers and backwoodsmen, later on in Abraham Lincoln's group of canny middle-westerners, and again in Bryan's populist movement. Feudalism was ended by the Civil War when southern aristocrats were defeated by a combination of small farmers and the eastern industrialists. Afterwards the industrialists rose to power, and today they opposed by labor and the agrarian group who now are deserting the old individualistic ideals for those of organization and economic and political combination. These random selections of political movements are cited to bring out the point

---

1. An amusing illustration is furnished by Sir Henry LUNN p.460; "A remark made to me in 1900 by Bishop Potter of New York illustrates this point; "When I get to England everybody calls me 'My Lord'; but when I land in New York, the first acquaintance who meets me pats me on the back and says, 'Hullo, Bish, how are you?'"



that in a nation where people take an active part in politics, the church is almost forced to play some part in them also.

Thus, in its concern over slavery and prohibition, American Christianity was more open to a theology of the social gospel than the Christianity of other nations where men were either not free, or where a State Church supported State policies. The American not only knew he had a part to take in his own government, but he was convinced, until recently, that both government and nation were progressing towards a goal. He knew progress to be a reality for he had seen his country transformed with his own eyes in his lifetime. And, with his vote, and his axe, he had participated in the transformation. It is not unlikely that this helped him to think in the same way about his religion: "the world progresses towards a goal, and with my life and my church I can have a share in the process."

It was conditions of frontier life that produced the "activism" traditionally associated with the<sup>1</sup> American character, as well as the individualism which is only now beginning to disappear as problems develop beyond the power of individuals to cope with. Like

---

1. BLIVEN p.68, "Only the American is obsessed with the idea that he as an individual must become a paragon, and if possible, overnight!"





democracy, both traits were "based on an abundance of free land."<sup>1</sup> The individual proved time after time that he could hew his own home and career out of the wilderness; and if he failed in one place he packed up and moved to another. Millions of Europeans were lifted from poverty to comfort in the course of the last three centuries, and "given a vision of hope, and assurance that the world held a place where were to be found high faith in man and the will and power to furnish him the opportunity to grow to the full measure of his own capacity."<sup>2</sup>

The continuous process of free competition for the unclaimed resources of a continent produced the optimism, the excessive nervous energy, the initiative, the self-reliance and the habit of innovation which have characterized Americans. And the "American Dream" of a democracy, a kind of Kingdom of God on earth continues to exercise a compelling force on the minds of many of its citizens. The American is still hopeful of creating the good society, and still believes to a certain extent that "change is inevitable, progress is the inevitable result of change....and happiness can be engineered."<sup>3</sup>

---

1. TURNER p.320  
3. MUMFORD p.64

2. IBID p.268



As Lewis Mumford has pointed out in "The Menace To The American Promise", the period of expansion upon which this optimism was based is over. The limits of the frontier were reached in 1890, immigration ceased in 1914, and capitalist expansion has come to a state of stabilization. Americans can no longer remain on the march, and indeed the growth of voluntary groups of every conceivable kind in the last fifty years is evidence of the increasing socialization of American life, of the gradual, almost subconscious recognition that individualism is not enough, and that social control must be exercised through organized groups.

The quotations that follow are from <sup>an</sup> American historian and an urban sociologist. The first summarizes the hope, perhaps the axiomatic assumption that governs the life of most Americans. The second quotation states the present dilemma in which that hope finds itself. Both ideas are reflected in the writings of contemporary American theologians.

Speaking of the heritage of pioneer experience Turner says that it is,

"-a passionate belief that a democracy was possible which should leave the individual a part to play in free society and not make him a cog in a machine operated from above; which trusted in the common man, in his tolerance, his ability to adjust differences with good humor, and to work out an American type from the contribution of all nations...."<sup>1</sup>





Commenting on what he regards as the present failure to realize that hope Mumford writes:

The liquidation of the humanitarian revolution that is going on today removes another promise of American life. That promise was based on the belief that all our internal difficulties could be solved by external arrangements: that mechanization was a substitute for humanization. The weakness of the labor movement, of radical reform, of revolution, now so pitifully evident in the present world was due to their inadequate human psychology. All these people were optimists and utilitarians; their heaven was too tame, and what is more, since they did not recognize hell, they were never able to utilize for more heavenly ends the deeper demonisms of human nature. For evil is positive: that means it can be utilized and converted, whereas the emotional neutrality of the utilitarians necessarily lessened their moral energies. The old utilitarian heaven is gone; no one will risk his life to capture it or even to safeguard it. This leaves our generation facing an unmitigated hell; the totalitarian heaven of those whose demonism and will-to-power is unqualified by the vision of a better world."<sup>1</sup>

In the next chapter the disillusionment that marks this latter citation will be seen to be definitely reflected in the statements of theologians.

But what, more particularly, have been the effects of democracy and individualism upon American Christianity? Obvious is their tendency to make for a great number of sects, democratically organized and weak from the standpoint of social effectiveness. Obvious too is the tendency of such free opportunities and conditions to undermine the importance of doctrines of sin, the initiative of God in salvation, and on the

---

1. MUMFORD p.65





other hand to raise man's own constructive powers to the role of the means of salvation.

Perhaps not so obvious are the consequences of lives lived continually on the activist plane; lives lived in doing things and rarely thinking about things; lives engrossed in building careers, communities and a nation; lives, in other words, almost barren of the depths of cultural and religious value the old world has produced. Especially when the period of expanding without thinking is over, when it is no longer possible to build a career, and when the ability to plumb the depths of human experience has not been developed. For the common man this emptiness has been filled with the revivalist type of Christianity; and hence revivalism and fundamentalism remain typical of American religious life even today. The corresponding adjustment of the theologian will be examined in the next chapter, for the subject of contemporary American theology is almost exactly the subject of the theologian's adaptation to the new American situation of a stable society.

Again, the effect of the long struggle to carve the Kingdom out of the wilderness has given American theology an emphasis on quantity, efficiency and activity which is missing in the classic theologians. It has also left the American with an incurable



dependence upon experience, as a source of religious authority at least on a level with the bible and the creeds, if not superceding them in some cases. It has stimulated him to erect an empirical theology, to attempt a scientific description of God which strikes the average European as either stupid or blasphemous. And, finally, it has led to the establishment of a universal system of education with the highest percentage of university students of any country in the world; an educational system that will, within a very few years, indoctrinate the majority of the youth of the American nation with an empirical attitude to reality that promises incalculable repercussions within American Christianity in the future. Perhaps the age of science is past for the academician, but for the man in the street it is just beginning. American theologians are aware of this, and it can be counted upon to play a large part in determining the future of American theology.

One last instance of the influence of democracy and individualism must suffice. G. B. Smith's cryptic remark, "An autocratic religion in a democratic world  
1  
would be an anomaly," sums it up.





Calvinism, which, apart from Quakerism, was almost the only type of theology the United States inherited from the Old World, laid stress on the absolute authority of God, upon the absolute authority of the Word of God found in the bible, and upon unquestioned obedience to church pronouncements on the subjects of nature, man and God. God was a totalitarian monarch whose wrath no mere human could placate, but which had been assuaged by Christ's sacrifice in the atonement. Over against this doctrine democracy stated that authority was vested in the people, that government was by the people, and that the test of good government was whether or not it was good for the people. Political life became a great experiment in joint living, requiring constant self-criticism and demanding leadership which was "vivid rather than formal," that is, leadership that actually led and did not merely inherit its position of authority. Whereas in the mediaeval and reformed churches the individual had existed for the State and Church, and possessed few rights, under democracy institutions existed for the sake of the individual, and possessed no rights if they did not function for his well being.



The result is that in America God has been democratized and made less arbitrary. He is thought of as present to every one, and is governed not by an arbitrary will but by his own moral being. He is no oriental despot, but the transcendent source of life itself, a constitutional rather than an absolute monarch,<sup>1</sup> whose omnipotence is rooted in his own eternal righteousness. God is a father who respects the moral autonomy of persons and works his will through love; he is emanent in the decisions of the majority and minority alike. His church must justify its existence by what it accomplishes for the character of mankind in the world.

The absolute assurance of salvation that marked Calvinism and Lutheranism has been replaced in much American theology by a joyful faith in the adventure of living, in the experiment of belief and practise, in the discovering of God's purposes. God is no longer a doctrinal blue-print drawn up in the past and projected onto reality because our ancestors claimed to have absolute knowledge of what he was like. Nor is he like the logic of Hegel or Aristotle, an hypostatization of

---

1. Compare the "finite God" of E.S. Brightmann, E.S. Ames, Bishop O'Connell and others.



the logical rythmn of our own minds. The democratic way is to allow God to project himself into man, to make use of every clue offered by the great varieties of men in order to acquire the fullest working knowledge of what God is like; and thus democratically to arrive with the aid of the collective insight of all people with <sup>at</sup> the knowledge of the divine will.

This democratizing of God has tended to reduce him to the lowest common denominator of the spiritual experience of the common people. It can also reduce love to sentimentalism, and religion to the passing of resolutions. Misunderstood, it contributes to a blurring of the moral consciousness, to a levelling down of right and wrong, to a philistine satisfaction with the mediocre in religious living and a pharisaic complacency with the self-sufficiency of a society that functions well enough to get along.

However, in spite of these weaknesses and dangers the "democratizing of God" is in American theological thinking. For example:

"Our nation was conceived in liberalism, and dedicated to the proposition that free men ought to bow their heads in obedience only before a government, or a deity, whose disposition toward them showed plainly some recognizable signs of benevolence and rationality. For an American wholly to





abandon liberalism....in politics or religion.... would be to affirm that we were conceived in sinful pride....and ought to curse the day we were born.

I for one cannot do that. I recognize that we have sinned and need to repent, but I cannot believe America has no value or mission in God's sight, and deserves simply to be obliterated. Moreover, I cannot believe it is a sin to hate tyranny, whether human or divine, and to reserve our loyalty for a God who, in all His ineffable mystery, yet shows Himself to us as light and not darkness, encouraging us in the pursuit of truth and justice, as free men and not as slaves."<sup>1</sup>

It is no wonder a Lutheran or Calvinist theologian from the Continent has difficulty in understanding the metaphysical basis for such a Christianity<sup>1</sup>.

Liberalism to him is not only a practical impossibility, in most cases it is not even an attractive alternative as a pathway to the presence of the saving God.

### (iii) ECONOMIC ABUNDANCE

The American economy, in Stuart Chase's phrase, is an "economy of abundance." A continent which might well have grown into a group of hostile nationalist states as did Europe, America gradually developed into a more or less integrated whole, capable of economic self-sufficiency on an unprecedented scale:

"All the problems that now confront the U.S. are problems.....of maintaining a high standard of living; of an overwhelming desire to keep democracy and make it work, even at the price of suffering....the U.S.



is faced with problems different from those in almost any other country in the world.."1  
(Underlining mine)

The migration to America was analagous to the movement of classes in the reformation. The latter was a movement of the lower and middle classes to whom Christianity had been passed down through the aristocracy for a thousand years. And the former was a movement of the poor of Europe under similar economic and religious compulsions. The rise of American culture is the rise of the American bourgeoisie.

Many a European, whose status was practically slavehood, had come to America and after five years of labor had become a free man and later a propertied merchant, farmer or fisherman. Land was cheap and consequently wages were high. Middle class industrialists soon made themselves tremendously wealthy and, as the continent became settled they grew in culture and power, and consciously began to seek control of the affairs of the nation. The Civil War was their victory, and so swift was their advance after its close by 1900 that "the very texture of American society<sup>2</sup> had been recast. A rural scene had become urban." During these years the middle classes ruled supreme,

---

1. FORUM p.7

2. BEARD II:206





and their manners, customs and religion were aped by a<sup>1</sup>  
large group, the farmers:

"Between the urban masses...and the plutocracy... stretched a wide and active middle class engaged in professional, mercantile, and clerical pursuits. It was in this group that the early Puritan characteristics....appeared to survive and unfold...their cultural operations beyond question set the central pattern for the future in America. They were predominant in the schools, colleges, and professions. They supplied...the intellectual interests. Members of this class also formed the backbone of Protestant Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

Christianity, largely speaking, became identified with the interests of this group in society. And since it was rising in the world the preachers found little to criticize in the social situation, and concentrated on denouncing individual vices.

American Christianity, during this period, adopted an evolutionary optimism in its attitude towards religion, all unconscious that, by and large, it was merely reflecting the peace and prosperity of the middle classes in their rise to power. The pessimistic note of Christian theology disappeared as it assimilated "the assumption and ideals of the comfortable middle<sup>3</sup> class." A contemporary writer notes that this situation has changed very little even today:

---

1. IBID II:402

2. IBID II:399

3. t'HOOFT p. 70



"Even today, in spite of disillusionments.... most Americans continue to think in terms of an assumption that everything is going to get bigger and better. No business man can imagine an existence in which his volume, even if not his profits, did not expand from year to year. The sudden sharp contraction in a period of depression is regarded as a temporary unavoidable misfortune, like spending a few days in bed with a cold. When the population really does turn downward, when the proportion of the aged is markedly increased and of the young diminished, this easy faith is going to have a head-on collision with some hard and unpleasant facts; but up to now, the iron has entered our collective soul only to a limited extent."<sup>1</sup>  
(Underlining mine).

The result has been a twofold emphasis, some groups proclaiming individual salvation, and others passionately advocating a crusade for social justice. The poor, who have increased in numbers tremendously since the depression received comfort from a wierd array of sects, and many of the rich whose lives were empty took to the Oxford Group. The social reformers have been somewhat disillusioned by failure of certain panaceas; and a third group is arising who demand a supra-historical supra-cultural for a religion that will have the power to challenge social wrong, and produce the moral tension necessary for religious action.

( iv ) THE PURITAN SPIRIT

Among the reasons which brought the early Puritans to America none was stronger than their desire to set



up a true biblical commonwealth. They believed in the Kingdom of God, not as a society of the good to be established on earth, but the living reality of God's present rule, already<sub>1</sub> established from eternity and needing to be obeyed. They were suspicious of power in the hands of any one king, priest or church elder: "It is necessary...that all power<sub>2</sub> that is on earth be limited, church-power or other.." Thus wrote John Cotton in 1654, and his conviction was shared by the other great religious group of the day, the Quakers; for they had just cause to fear absolutism. That fear of absolutism was written into the American constitution in the systems of checks and balances restricting the power of the several arms of the state. But authority had to be vested somewhere and with the Puritans it was in the scriptures and a hard and fast code of morals derived from them. With the Quakers it was in the inner light, checked by the scriptures.

At the time of the "Great Awakening," says Niebuhr, the two criteria of inner light and scripture were combined: "Scripture without experience is empty and experience without scripture is blind."<sup>3</sup> From that time forward the Puritan theology rested on the conception of the Kingdom of Christ, the Christ men had

---

1. NIEBUHR p.51-56

2. IBID p.76

3. IBID p.109





known in their individual experience. But this concept was modified as social conditions grew worse, and the social gospel grew up; the gospel that preached the Kingdom that was coming, the Kingdom of God on earth. Whichever of these three basic theological formulas governed - Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Christ, or Kingdom of God on Earth - the Puritans could not get over the idea that there had to be some place of authority from which to enforce moral living. And it was that idea which created the Puritan spirit.

The Puritan spirit spread throughout most of the major American denominations and remains in many places today. Its primary concern was conduct; and its chief motif was asceticism. It anathematized all "immoral" conduct, and so inhibited several generations of men and women that when they did break loose after the first Great War they did so in that outburst of unrestricted self-expression known as the "Jazz Age." In order to enforce its ethical code some transcendental sanction was necessary, for the early preachers found themselves unable to restrict the joys and pleasures of the exuberant pioneer by mere earthly admonitions. The result was that in addition to condemning all sensual pleasures (and substituting for them the extremes of religious devotion, emotionalism and



fanaticism) they set up a system of moral taboos and invoked the fear of hell to coerce people into obeying them. The new authority grim and hard was successful.

However, in recent times many forces have contributed to the final destruction of the old Puritanic dogmas and moral code. Calvinism in the sense of predestination and election disappeared early because it was not a tenable belief in a land where there was opportunity for everyone. The surplus of wealth accumulated by hard-working, strict-living Puritanic parents seemed to their children to be there to be enjoyed, and when the latter grew up the Puritan code began to totter. The enormous influx of immigrants with more relaxed moral standards, the equality of women, the solvent effect of Darwinianism on Christian doctrine, the first Great War, propagation of birth control methods, and many other influences flowing from an increasingly scientific and highly industrial society, all contributed towards the dissolution of the stiff moral codes inherited from the New England fathers.

The Puritan spirit was one of the factors that made American theology primarily practical in content. The principles that have dominated much of American theology have been moralistic; even the social gospel of the past forty years became obligatory for the same formal reasons that had been advanced on behalf of the





Puritan virtues. The moral demands of the Puritan's code were simply transformed into the moral demands of the radical social reformer, and as little basic thinking was done about reasons for the latter as for the former. It was good and right, that was all, and ought to be done! The first theology, the New England theology, was a neo-Calvinism, but its grim doctrines were dissolved in the clear sunshine of the new land of opportunity and failed to exercise any influence on subsequent theological thinking.

Today the swing in American theology is definitely back to religion; it is argued that a virile ethical life must be rooted in something beyond the circle of ethical concerns. But even so there are many good Christians who continue to idolize the "Thou Shalt Not's" (smoke, drink, gamble, dance, fornicate); people who fail to realize that the society in which such belief functioned successfully has passed. In a new civilization the Puritans taboos are merely a formal system of law; without a deeper spirit they are not sufficient for either social or individual salvation.

To recapitulate, the pioneer period was occupied in setting up social controls and institutions by which American citizens could be trained and moulded. The past epoch was faced with the problem of freeing the institutions of church, family school, and state.



The present generation faces the problem of what is to be done with this freedom in a society which is increasingly organic.<sup>1</sup> American theology bears the imprint of all three emphases: the old Calvinistic moralism, institutional moralism, and the "freedom-from-any-authoritism," of today and yesterday. The main theological legacy of the Puritan spirit is the emphasis which it helped to produce in American Protestantism, the emphasis on the practical and moralistic side of religion.

(v) CONCLUSION.

In the United States mankind's eternal quest for the good life, or his struggle to realize the new vision that continually stirs him to higher levels of satisfaction and achievement, or his restlessness that seeks its rest in the assurance of a gracious God - found a new setting and assumed different forms of expression.

Traditional theology, as well as philosophy, was demolished by the corroding force of new concepts of the relation of Church and State, of science, and of education. The spirit of individualism and religious tolerance, the need for a strong ethical code, the vast economic resources available for free exploitation, these were the "acids of modernity" of that day. Under their influence the Christianity which the Pilgrims brought was eaten away, and out of the solution that

---

1. HOLT p.631



was left a new Christianity and a new theology crystallized.

Immersed in seemingly endless waves of political and economic expansion Christianity came to be identified with some aspect, practical, social or scientific, of the creative endeavors with which men were occupied. Now the struggle with the raw materials of a new world is over, and the problem American theologians must face is the problem Don Quixote faced after a life-time of tilting at wind-mills: "I do not know what I am winning with the force of my labors." Today the American is frank to confess that he does not know what God he has been working with in the struggle of all activities, "If God is not the God of my past experience, who or what is he?"

From the preceding discussion this much can be said about the answers the theologians may give to that question: their answers in order to mean "life eternal" to contemporary Americans, must be couched in the scientific, democratic and socially meaningful thought categories that have been gradually developing in the life of the United States. It is not that environment determines belief, but it is out of and in environment that the very attitude of belief springs. That which will be new life to an individual depends





upon what of life there is already in him; that which will mediate the grace of God to men depends entirely on what measure of grace they have already received.

The following chapter deals with the answer to the question, "What and where is God?", that is beginning to emerge from the struggle of American theologians with their environment, their philosophies and with each other. The influence of the background touched upon in this chapter will be taken for granted; its effect will be obvious enough and will not require further description.



BIBLIOGRAPHY Ch. 9.

- | Reference<br>Title |   |
|--------------------|---|
| ALLEN,             | F.L., "Since Yesterday", three articles on the social climate of the 30's in the November, December and January issues of Harpers, 1939-40. |
| BACON,             | L.W., "A History of American Christianity", New York, the Christian Literature Co., 1897. *   |
| BEARD,             | C.A. & M.R., "The Rise of American Civilization", 2 Vol ., New York *   |
| BONN,              | M.J., "The American Adventure" (See Ch.VII)   |
| BLIVEN,            | B, "Notes On The American Character", NEW REPUBLIC, Nov. 8, 1939.   |
| FORTUNE,           | "U.S.A.", article from FORTUNE, in READERS DIGEST, April, 1940.   |
| GARRISON,          | W.E., "Intolerance" (See Ch. IV )   |
| HOLT,              | A.E., "Western Society At The Crossroads", CHRISTENDOM, Summer 1936   |
| HORTON,            | W.M., "Contemporary English Theology" (See Ch. VII)   |
| JEFFERSON,         | H.B., "The Role of Religion In a Changing Culture", THE JOURNAL OF RELIFION, January 1936.  |
| LATOURETTE,        | K.S., "A History Of The Expansion Of Christianity, Vol. III (See Ch.III)*   |
| LURN,              | H.S., "The Church And the World", REVIEW OF THE CHURCH, Oct., 1936.   |
| MCGIFFERT,         | A.C., "The Progress Of Theological Thought During the Past Fifty Years." THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY, July, 1916.                      |





- MUMFORD, L., "The Menace To The American Promise",  
NEW REPUBLIC, Nov. 8, 1939
- NIEBUHR, H.R., "The Kingdom Of God In America",  
Willett, Clark & Co., Chicago, 1937.\*
- PALMER, F.P., "The Influence Of Democracy Upon  
Religion", HARVARD THEOLOGICAL  
REVIEW, October, 1910. \*
- RICHARDSON, C.C., "The Church Through The Centuries"  
(See Ch. 4)
- SMITH, G.B., "Christianity And The Spirit Of  
Democracy", THE AMERICAN JOURNAL  
OF THEOLOGY, July 1917. \*
- t'HOOFT, W.A.V. & Oldham, "The Church And Its  
Function In Society", Chicago,  
Willett, Clark & Co., 1937.
- SWEET, W.W., "The Frontier In American Chris-  
tianity ", in "Environmental Factors  
In Christian History" (See Ch. II).
- TURNER, F.J., "The Frontier In American History",  
New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1920. \*
- WERTENBAKER, T.J., "The First Americans", New York,  
Macmillans, 1929, also - "The  
Founding Of American Civilization,  
The Middle Colonies", New York,  
Scribner's 1938. \*
- WORKMAN, H.B., "Methodism", Cambridge, University  
Press, 1912.



CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN THEOLOGY.

"I was self sufficient in 1929. Now I know that I was not and am not: that I live by the grace of God and stand straightest when I am on my knees,"  
(A. J. Muste)<sup>1</sup>

"If hope and love grew out of the flesh,  
As flesh grew out of the steaming clod,  
Shall life not slip through the prisoning mesh  
To loftier levels still untrod?"  
(Garrison)<sup>2</sup>

The material for this chapter has been drawn from a study of Wieman and Meland's "American Philosophies Of Religion", from Ferm's two volumes, "Contemporary American Theology", and from the series of articles appearing in the CHRISTIAN CENTURY during 1939 entitled, "How My Mind Has Changed In The Past Decade". The additional books and articles listed in the bibliography have had a more indirect influence but have also contributed to my understanding of the present theological situation in America. Ferm's symposium consists of the autobiographical statements of the development of the religious thought of twenty-three outstanding American theologians, and since it was published in the years 1932-33 and probably written a year or so in advance of those dates, it may be taken as representative of pre-depression theology. The CHRISTIAN CENTURY'S series describes thought in the post depression

---

1. C. C. (Muste) p. p. 667      2. C. A. T. 11.150.



period and contains among its thirty-four contributors, outstanding preachers as well as teachers of theology.

"American Philosophies Of Religion" (1936) is a resume of the thinking of nearly sixty leading American teachers of religion, and emphasizes the philosophic side of their thinking. Many of the men considered from the philosophical standpoint in the latter volume were encountered in Term's symposium, and appeared again in the CHRISTIAN CENTURY'S series; thus giving a comprehensive picture of the growth and outlook of American theology during the last twenty years.

The three most representative theologians from this group are Henry Nelson Wieman, Walter M. Horton and Reinhold Niebuhr. In Addition the evolution of the theological outlooks of William Adams Brown and Charles Clayton Morrison offer themselves as weather-vanes, and point the direction in which the theological winds are blowing. The plan adopted in the following pages is first of all to describe the main emphases which occupy the attention of American theologians, and secondly to consider the possibilities for the future. In both cases the works of the five men mentioned above will be kept in mind as illustrative of the interpretation advanced by the writer.





(1) PRE-DEPRESSION THEOLOGY.

The whole course of the rise of American theology is summed up by Professor Mackintosh's phrase, "Towards an untraditional orthodoxy."<sup>1</sup> It is characteristic of American, as contrasted with European thinking that it finds no contradiction in this juxtaposition of terms. The historical conditions that made such a tradition of "untraditionalism" possible were depicted in the previous chapter. It remains to describe certain typical features of this new outlook in theology.

For it is new. Until the last two centuries theology was God's revelation given once for all in Bible, Jesus Christ, and in the Church. It was only in America that a period of physical expansion coincided with theological concepts of a developmental kind, and that the idea of change took deep enough root to remain permanently imbedded in the outlook of the average citizen. Since the first Great War it has been in America that a social gospel could have much relevancy. With the exception of a small minority, there were few Christians in other countries who realized the religious significance of social movements; they could not see social change taking place. Americans were habituated to democratic ways of living, to joint action, to the idea of the importance of

---

1. C. A. T. 1.277.



the individual, and to the humanistic belief that man was not only the measure of all things, but in some respects creator<sup>1</sup> as well. As a result, "untraditionalism" flourished.

In consequence most American theologians, regardless of other differences, at one time or another subscribed to the sentiment of Tennyson,

"I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of  
the suns."<sup>2</sup>

True, like the poet they recognised that "science moves but slowly creeping on from point to point"; but they still looked forward, "clung to all the present for the promise that it closed", and anticipated a future where, "The common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in  
awe  
And the kindly earth shall slumber lapt in universal law." "Untraditionalism" was accepted by all but the fundamentalists, and debate centred around its content and goal rather than the validity of the concept itself.

Up until 1929 it is possible to pick out certain emphases upon which there was general agreement; the

---

1. AUBREY p. 48. On this point an English churchman comments: "The American lack of self-consciousness sometimes takes men to lengths which rather startle us. I cannot imagine Englishmen describing themselves as CREATIVE artists or CREATIVE theologians or CREATIVE anything else. To them it would sound rather like usurping the functions and place of the Almighty, like Father Divine."

2. This and the following quotations are from Locksley Hall.





variations in American theology were variations from these themes, and not innovations on them.

In the first place one is struck by the fact that the majority of the writers in Ferm's symposium have created their own theologies by taking bits of it from philosophy, science, the Bible, the creeds and their own religious experience. Little is accepted as given from the past, and little attention is paid to the creeds.

Their descriptions of how they came to be Christian ministers and theological teachers are rather curious deviations from the orthodox concept of a "call": most of them appear to have just "happened" into the ministry. Most were suspicious of authoritarianism from early childhood, and many record, as if in apology for their present position, that they were never forced to adhere to any authoritarian statement of religious truth. They take science and democracy for granted, as necessary tools for living, and as valuable instruments for aid in the discovery of God's will in the universe.

Again, they generally agree that Christianity consists in Christian living rather than a set of doctrine to be believed and defended, and follow Horace Bushnell in his belief that "Christian Nurture" is as important a channel for the grace of God as catastophic conversion, preaching or the tactics of the revivalist. Along with



this goes the emphasis upon religion as a growing phenomenon and the individual's religious experience as an evolutionary process. Authority in religion has come to to the thought of issuing from religious experience, experimentally validated and empirically observable; metaphysics is conspicuous by its absence.

A tendency not quite so universal in these writers is that of defining meaning as personal. Bowne's philosophy enjoyed widespread popularity as an interpretation of religion in the modern world and American theologians have apparently found in the doctrines that stemmed from him and Pringle-Pattison the chief philosophic clue to the meaning of life. Human personality is the important thing in this view; personality is the highest product of evolution and provides the key to reality.

The personalist emphasis joins with the idea of Christianity as religious living (by persons in relation to other persons), and with the concept of authority as experimental, to make for a decidedly man-centred theology. However, this "man-centredness" is largely to them the highest form, the best way of expressing truth about a God who to each of the symposium contributors is transcendent, objectively real and in his existence independent of their wishes, hopes and ambitions. It is apparent that for them Christian truth is conveyed through





a definitely non-creedal, individualistic and man-centred system of theology. Horton's words, written in 1935, are particularly true of theology of the pre-depression period:

"It is very characteristic of American theology, ever since Jonathan Edwards, to begin confidently to build its structure from the ground up, on freshly cleared land, according to some clear-cut rational plan, instead of rebuilding some ancient structure, as one inevitably does in Europe."<sup>1</sup>

(11) THE POST-DEPRESSION PERIOD.

If these convictions are representative of the results of pre-depression experience, what change, if any, is discoverable in the thought of those who have written of their thinking since that time? The change is what might be expected from the nature of the social crisis that took place. The men in the CHRISTIAN CENTURY series placed more stress on religion than on ethics; recovered their emphasis on a God-centred as compared with a man-centred faith; discovered that belief did matter as well as "living"; agreed that grace was mediated through crisis experience as well as through gradual growth; acquired an interest in metaphysics and, in general, agreed that the failures and disillusionments of the past ten years have forced them to reconsider the nature of their religion, their source of hope, and the forms of experi-

---

1. HORTON 5, p. 295.





ence and belief by which God is apprehended. Many retained their previous beliefs, but the majority confessed that their liberalism of the '20's had received severe treatment during the following decade.

Even so confirmed a naturalist as Wieman found at the end of the period that he was able to make use of the traditional concepts of sin, grace, atonement, salvation and so forth, in ways that carried meaning to him, and that expressed shades of religious experience that other more scientific terms were unable to convey.

Finally, many in the series expressed a new faith in the possibility of ecumenism, and in "the universal church" as distinct from "the churches"; something that was seen to have been lacking until recent times in American Christianity.

Walter Horton may be taken as typical of those who did experience positive change over this period since he stands mid-way between the naturalistic group represented by Wieman, and the "neo-supernaturalists" led by Niebuhr. The two latter will be considered first.

It is significant that what induced Reinhold Niebuhr to change his theological attitude was the realization, after living in a large industrial town for some years previous to 1929, that Christianity, as he had been expounding it in its liberal form, was only a rationali-



zation of the hopes and satisfactions of the middle class which dominated American culture. His endeavors to reach a point from which he could criticize that culture, from which he could see God's light and God's judgement breaking in upon it, led him to adopt his own peculiar variety of dialectical theology:

"Christianity, in short, faces tremendous tasks of extricating itself from the prejudices and illusions of a culture which is rapidly sinking with the disruption of the civilization which gave it birth. This is not yet fully realized in America, because the prospects and hopes of our civilization are sufficiently brighter than in Europe to give liberal illusions a tougher vitality and a slower death here. This task of emancipation is a tremendous one, partly because liberalism as a culture is still superior to many of the culture which threaten to displace it politically...

...Liberalism seems unable to move toward the economic democracy which is acquired to maintain its political democracy...Christianity..is the power and the wisdom of God which makes decisions in history possible...

Christ..is what I am essentially, and therefore what I ought to be....he is also what I can never be. He is therefore the source of my despair. Only in that despair and in repentance can he become the source of a new hope....what is genuinely Christian in liberal Christian moralism: the insistence that Christ is our law, our deal, our norm, and the revelation of our essential being."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Wieman, in contrast, began the decade with a firm belief that the only knowable God was the objective (and thus supra-cultural) God of scientifically demonstrable fact,<sup>2</sup> and ended by intimating that he was willing to venture an act of faith in the objective reality of other qualities in God's character that the net of science, even a theological science, might not be able to catch.

---

1. C. C. (Niebuhr) p. 343; cf. p.





Like Barth, both Niebuhr and Wieman insist that God is a God exterior to and independent of our experience, our feelings, our thought processes and our ideals. None of these human products can be elevated to the status of the God-like. Niebuhr teaches in addition that the great statements of Christian faith contain revelations of the nature of God, and of his will, which stand over against us and challenge us. If man is so rooted in his own experience that he can never rise above it, as Niebuhr frequently says, there is no hope of him finding God, unless God first seeks him. This he does in his "word", in Jesus Christ.

Niebuhr starts from the supernatural presence of God in his saving word, standing over against the world, ever challenging, judging and pressing in upon the world in the love that sustains all things. Wieman begins from the other end. To escape subjectivity, he says, we must use the only method available, the scientific. With it man can discover that God is, and something about his nature. What saves from subjectivity is not the traditional creeds or Bible, for these are also the products of man's own hands, but the scientific method which, after long years, has been developed to pierce through the fogs of superstition and direct men to the Canaan of a mature religion.



Wieman admits that in the creeds are represented experience of men that is deep and true: but it must be checked by the data of science. Niebuhr finds in science a factual description of certain portions of reality that is accurate and valid; but it is only useful and completely true when it is used in the light of the revelation provided for us in Jesus.

Walter Horton stands mid-way, as the title of his article states, "Between Liberalism and the New Orthodoxy" and is a prominent member of the school of theology founded by D. C. Mackintosh and known as the "Religious Realists". The period of social distress shattered Horton's faith in a humanistic natural theology and he discovered from Augustine, Calvin and Barth the truth of that aspect of God's nature denoted by the term, "otherness". He learned the same lesson from Wieman but felt unable, like him, to limit God to what could be known of him through the scientific approach: "That God works in nature I grant, but not that he is a mere part of our process in nature. If man must depend upon God as humbly as Wieman insists, nature must also."<sup>1</sup>

---

1. C. C. (Horton) p. 639.





In words that express the experience of many who wrote in the CHRISTIAN CENTURY series, Horton says:

"I used to argue for the legitimacy of faith in the Christian revelation, as a possible over-belief, superadded to the surer affirmations of scientific theology. Now I am prepared to argue for the legitimacy of scientific natural theology as a corrective to the vagaries of an exclusive "revelational" theology, but my own centre of confidence and hope has passed from science to revelation, from human discovery to divine guidance. I would not expunge any chapters or paragraphs from what I have written in defence of scientific natural theology, but I would print all such passages in smaller type."<sup>1</sup>

"..there remains the fact of human finitude, which condemns the saint as well as the sinner to see ultimate reality 'through a glass darkly'".<sup>2</sup>

"Jesus is not merely the prophetic interpreter of a divine act; He is Himself the act of God to be interpreted; and in this act God utters Himself so decisively that all other Words of God must be measured by this standard... ..In emphasizing the once-for-allness of the revelation of God in Christ, I have not meant to suggest that it is isolated, unrepeatable and so unverifiable...".<sup>3</sup>

However,

"Human reason and human will power are once more at a discount, as in similar crises before; and the danger now is, not that divine revelation will be spurned, but that it will be embraced with fanatical fervor, and understood in a superstitious sense..... when so many are convinced that the idea of God is a mere subjective illusion, it is valuable to establish it as a matter of knowledge that SOME divine reality, whatever its ultimate nature may be, is surely THERE. If the top of the mountain of God is forever beyond our ken, its base is in our midst and should be susceptible of investigation if the mountain is really there at all."<sup>4</sup>

---

1. IBID p. 639    2. HORTON 6, p. 248    3. IBID p. 258  
4. IBID 227, 271





Horton concludes that the human correlative of divine disclosure is "venturesome faith", that both are necessary, but that when grace is experienced it is man who has been "found by God's patient, outgoing mercy, which somehow managed to unlock the door from the inside, and so let itself in."<sup>1</sup>

The majority of American theologians can be placed between Horton and Wieman on the left, or between Horton and Niebuhr on the right. Science and the ideas of progress, democracy and personality have not been given up; rather, they have been supplemented with a higher reality.

The traditional American note, the note of the "Social Gospel" is not omitted in recent writings, but receives even stronger affirmation. The neo-supernaturalists like Niebuhr, have moved politically to the left and theologically to the right. The storms of the post-depression era have made them cannier in accepting professed panaceas, but even more outspoken in denunciation of present conditions. The message first sounded in definite form by Rauschenbusch has been echoed loudly today by men who are conscious, with the European, Paul Tillich, that underneath modern politics is the stuff out of which religion is made.

---

1. IBID p. 272.



Two examples will serve to illustrate that the theology of the social gospel is not only still alive, but is something much deeper than the pantheism attributed to it some years ago by Visser t'Hooft. The latter overlooked the fact that the social gospel does not find God merely in the social situations, but as a demand upon them, and a demand that varies from crisis to crisis. Shailer Mathews, doughty pioneer of the social gospel, closes his autobiography with these words:

"I envy a generation that will be called upon to defend the individual from absorption into the social process and to direct that process toward personal rather than economic efficiency."<sup>1</sup>

Kierkegaard would not have disowned that sentence! Arthur E. Holt, a worth successor to Rauschenbusch, says in the current Rauschenbusch lectures:

"A certain strategic primacy characterizes the religious community. It can be set up and become vigorous without waiting for the perfecting of economic, social and political conditions. It is right here that religion has its opportunity...it can begin to exist and do its work. The minister's first obligation is to make the religious community strong and vigorous even before he attempts to improve the political and social relationships...the Church has influenced society most when it has been most preoccupied with the vivid experience of God...."

---

1. BUCKHAM p. 208 (quoted)





"Love is the dynamic of the Christian society. And out of it arises an experience of social trust which holds men together. In the end, the question, How is society to be held together? must be answered. ..the unity of those who trust one another is basic to any society..people who trust one another can move mountains. They can make necessary changes in society...People who do not have the cohesion of social faith are helpless in the face of individual need and social evil..A social order based on trust, on integrity of thought and mutual self-revelation--such an order might extend itself into a world-wide reality..."<sup>1</sup>

Another typical American emphasis which the current controversies have not destroyed is the idea of religion as an experimental adventure in living under the rule and love of God:

"Is there no method by which we can distinguish the ultimate truth in religion? It may well be to consider the basic assumptions of scientific method, and the implications of applying them to religion.. ..may we not test our theological concepts and systems of ethics by measuring their results in terms of strong character and wholesome personality? Mental health is at least a measure of spiritual law, if not identical with it....Jesus believed in an experimental faith...'By their fruits ye shall know them'...He rarely appealed to authority.... but to experience..."<sup>2</sup>

"For the experimental logic of Jesus, all of life is an enduring laboratory where men may verify or refute by anticipated consequences the best generalizations of their wisest prophets...When men consent to receive the supernatural teaching of God in the natural manner by which human beings receive all else that comes to them, they will find the Bible to be inspired and inspiring source book, a gold mine of initial data, concerning God's plan of life for men; and they will find Christianity to be not



"something handed down ready-made from the past, but rather a program of personal and social achievement, rooted in the past and highly illumined by the records of past experience, but with its richest significance as a dynamic way of life discoverable and verifiable only in the fruits it may produce in the present and future. By these fruits may Christians verify their faith both in God and in the good news brought from him by Jesus; and thus verified, scientifically, in the experimental laboratory of human life, this faith becomes knowledge of the truth that sets men free."<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, an American emphasis that persists vigorously today, is the importance of personal experience in religion. It is fitting that the illustrative material for this trait of American Christianity should be drawn from the writings of the revered leader of the Quaker group that first brought the concept of inner, personal experience to this continent.

Rufus Jones, along with William Adams Brown, is often spoken of as the dean of American theologians. For half a century he has upheld the Quaker doctrine of the inner light. His mysticism has been practical, sane and rational, and his pen and teaching have had an influence on American Christianity out of all proportion to the numerical strength of the Society of Friends. There are countless numbers who have been stimulated by his beliefs, beliefs which have upheld the "finite-infinite

---

1. NELSON 401, 410.





and temporal-eternal"nature of man, a near-Kierkegaardian doctrine lacking only the harsh contradictions of the Danish divine's teaching.

Jones asserts that man shall "look for God--the God of the Christ revelation--not above the dome of the world, not beyond the tinge and color of life, but in the current of it, a current that never runs smooth, in the love and the tragedy of this his life, immersed as it is in the finite."<sup>1</sup> To a modern Luther Jones would have gently have replied, "Look within yourself; there in the centre of repose the finite meets the infinite; do not be confused by the misguided utterances of the early fathers, we are never alone when we are striving upward.. ..Life is possible for us because self-consciousness opens out into God-consciousness, because we are ourselves plus a More...Neither man as man, nor the universe itself, is insulated from God."<sup>2</sup> God is both transcendent and immanent; united within us in close communion, the over-soul without us which constantly stimulates us to respond. The following citation is very interesting when compared with similar statements by the continental theologians such as Holl, Tillich, Brunner, etc.:

---

1. JONES, p. 197

2. JONES, p. 41, 183, 133, 151.





"I find God actually revealed in the moral demonstrations of history, in the highest reaches of humanity, above all in a divine-human Person, in truth, beauty, love and goodness as we know them, and in the finite-infinite nature of our own self-consciousness as persons. The line between a defeative dualism of a two-world theory and an equally dangerous pantheism, which blurs all moral distinctions and which names the All, 'God', is a difficult line to draw, but there is no peace or salvation to be had in either of those extreme views. If our world falls apart into completely sundered halves, to be joined only by miracle, or if it is so completely One that there is no 'Other', then in neither case can an intelligible interpretation be found. Our narrow path of affirmation must lie somewhere between these two poles of difficulty and of danger..."<sup>1</sup>

The validity of Jones's theology is demonstrated in pragmatic fashion by the incalculable tide of saving energy which it has released into a stricken world. Jones and his fellow Quaker advocates of non-violence are the spear-heads for innumerable relief and refugee projects, programs for social reform and seminars for the study of social conditions. Jones passionately held belief in personal religion, issues in the widest of social effort.

A brief summary is in order at this point. The outstanding American trait discovered at the beginning was that of "untraditionalism". This, along with certain other characteristics such as reliance on personal experience, a predilection for empirically founded authority, the developmental concept of religion, a distaste for

---

1. C. A. T. 1.211.



metaphysics, ignorance of the church universal, a hearty belief in the churches as such, a liking for personalism and man-centred theology, and the acceptance of scientific method and democracy as essential to Christian living--summed up the pre-depression theology. It believed in the promise of the future, although an occasional note of uneasiness could be detected in various searches for certainty, grounded in personality, science, or religious experience as the case may have been.

This theology performed the necessary function of releasing Americans from the chains of a highly immoral type of Calvinism. The God that was at the centre of the Puritan outlook was not, to us, the God of Jesus. The liberal concepts of growth, of immanence, of love, of the personality of God were far more calculated to inspire individuals to higher living in the last fifty years, than the doctrine of hell-fire with which the pioneers had been subjugated.

Unfortunately for liberalism its hopes were fastened to the creative abilities of men in the struggle with their environment. When the final effect of the first Great War swept America in the 1929 depression a period of disillusionment followed in which many of the programs and good intentions, upon which the liberals had counted, collapsed. The depression correlated with the final





closing of the age of expansion: people realized for for the first time they had to meet economic problems without the frontier into which to expand. Coincident with political difficulties at home were world disturbances that also affected the United States more directly since the frontier had vanished.

And, arising out of Europe's agony came a new theology. Barthianism sent its trumpet call round the world to call Christians back to acknowledge the sovereignty of their God, his wholly otherness and their own abject sinfulness. Some were glad to hear it; others welcomed the challenge of a one-sided doctrine; and some indignantly repudiated it as savoring of mediaval obscurantism, and veiling the submission of religious forces to economic and political circumstances that ought to be determined by Christianity and not vice versa.

On the whole the CHRISTIAN CENTURY series would indicate American theology is rejecting Barthianism although it is strongly influenced by <sup>it.</sup> him. Of the 34 writers, twelve went out of their way to repudiate it, nearly ten studiously ignored it, some two or three accepted it, and the remainder gratefully acknowledged the correction and challenge it had furnished for their own thinking. The present situation in the United States witnesses a return from moralism to religion, to meta-



physics and to a belief in the objective nature of God, his revelation and his grace. The "New Orthodoxy" which Mackintosh asked for 29 years ago seems to be in the process of formation.

Whatever shape it takes, it will retain at least four elements of the old liberalism: the idea of the "Christlikeness" of God; an emphasis on the social gospel; the concept of the experimental nature of religious living; and the centrality of personal experience of God. What is the American theology of the immediate future going to like? What is it that Europeans are going to have to understand if ecumenism is to proceed successfully?

### (iii) THE FUTURE

From the historical survey made in preceding chapters it is evident this question ought to be phrased, "What is the formal content of belief that will adequately meet the religious needs of American Christians in the period of social readjustment that lies ahead?"

There are as many answers to this question as persons who attempt to answer it. Wieman thinks that theology rooted in the philosophical traditions of idealism and romanticism will tend to disappear and more emphasis will be placed on the extremes of neo-supernaturalism and naturalism. Neo-supernaturalism is able to accept all





that science and liberalism have to offer in the way of criticism, and still stand on its own feet. It needs no interpreters, anymore than the religious naturalist needs a mediator between his religious and his scientific views.

"The religious person who is informed can today go all the way over into naturalism or all the way over into supernaturalism without experiencing any religious difficulties with science,"<sup>1</sup>

In Wieman's view idealism and romanticism perform mediating functions, and hence will disappear in the distant future as schools of thought. They will persist as long as the masses require mediators. But in the end, unless social disturbance is too violent, a new kind of naturalistic religion will emerge, non-mechanical, non-materialistic, and based on the scientifically discoverable acts of an organically construed universe.

On the other hand, G. W. Richards maintains that the outcome of scientific cultures will not differ from that of other cultures. Namely, the acknowledgement of the inability of reason to guide men without the power and light that flows from God's act of revelation of the deeper nature of reality in Jesus Christ. E. S. Brightman believes that the various theological traditions will continue unabated, but that the future will witness a great increase in co-operative thinking by men of all

---

1. WIEMAN & MELAND p. 344





types.

D. C. Mackintosh argues that the present accomplishments of science make it possible for religious people to advance considerably upon what can be objectively known about the working of God in the world; hence, he foresees for the future a religious realism, a theological attitude that accepts the concrete, observable facts of all types of experience and relates them in an organic body of faith, regarded as both discovered and revealed. E. S. Ames is certain the future of theology lies with pragmatism?

These are all philosophic categories. One of the mysteries of American theology, from the European standpoint, is its preoccupation with other than religious criteria; Americans retort that every human tradition is ultimately religious and may act as an aid to the shaping of a system of theology. The fact of the matter is that philosophic traditions will only tend to disappear to the extent they maintain an irrational hostility to scientific discoveries. Their actual growth in the future will depend more upon the temperaments of individual philosophers and theologians than anything else. Each of these philosophic traditions has emerged from a historical situation and met the needs of a certain set of past circumstances. The only safe prediction about



the cultural frame of reference from which the theology of the future will draw its terminology is that many years ahead there will be a new one. And its name will be neither idealistic, romanticist, pragmatic, natural or supernatural--but some new compound of or emergent from them all.

A better clue to the future of American Christianity is to be gained from the living theological experience of two leading American Christians. They, in their own lives, typify the growth and direction of American theology; and, as concrete "theological existents" rather than philosophic ideas, their hopes, insights and needs furnish a more realistic criterion for the future than the systems of the philosophers.

Charles Clayton Morrison remarks that the past decade has been for him, "the story of my effort to identify, by careful thinking, the God whom I now had an empirical right to search for in the objective order."<sup>1</sup> Like many Americans Morrison for years carried around two sets of beliefs: the empirically verifiable ones furnished by science, and the religious statements given him by the creeds. He was haunted by a sense of something objectively "given" in the universe but failed to identify this givenness with the God of Christian faith. The "given"

---

1. C. C. p. 1373.





for him was what was functional for experience, and the God of the cosmos and of religious experience could not be identified with the God of Christian revelation.

Wieman, in the 1920's played the role of Barth for Morrison. He demonstrated that science could be used to prove the objective reality of God; a God not dependent upon an IDEA, FEELING, INTUITION or FAITH but real in himself apart from human efforts to understand him. God became something upon which psychology depended, not something dependent upon psychology. What then is God? Morrison "began to see that it is in history that the psychological and the cosmological meet, for history is both the human aspect of the cosmos and the scene of the divine activity to which all human experience is the response. It is in history that the God of the cosmos has made known his character and nature."

The mistake of Protestantism was to confuse objective, historical reality - the Christian community - with inner, private experience. Men did not experience God and then create a community, but they knew salvation through being confronted by a new organic reality. New life, emerging organically in history, outside of man confronts the individual as Christianity; Christian experience is the human response to the new life, not its substance.



Protestantism, asserts Dr. Morrison, has been afraid of history; it has focused its attention on private experience to the detriment of the objective reality of Christianity. Hence, civilization goes on its way untouched by religion until the former interferes with the privacy of the Christian's inner life, as in the totalitarian countries.

Where then is the revelation? If not in experience is it in the Bible or the creeds? Morrison answers, "No!":

"The 'objective' God of 'faith alone' is not the HISTORICALLY revealed God with whom is our salvation. This 'objective' God of inner contemplation is only the IDEA of an objective God, not the God historically revealed to which the idea refers. THAT God is in HISTORY--not alone in history as a past event, but in the historical continuation of that event down to our own time. (Cf. Tillich, ch. 12, p. 26 below) What God revealed in history was not a Bible, nor a creed, nor yet a truth, but HIMSELF. Though God may be said to have 'broken into history', or to have disclosed himself by a mighty act of immanent creativity, he did not thereupon withdraw from history. He remains with us, and our salvation is real only when he confronts us on the level where he is and where we are, and when we yield our lives to him there."<sup>1</sup>

The full significance of Jesus life, says Morrison, is what became of it in history: the moment was ripe and with his coming "history burst forth with a new creation".<sup>2</sup>

---

1. MORRISON p. 466.

2. IBID p. 467.





God, through Jesus, as the chief factor in a "divine conspiracy of innumerable other factors", projected the Christian church into history.

Dr. Morrison credits Shirley Jackson Case with making the assertion that the distinction between inner essence and environing stimuli is false. All Christians, said Case, in 1914, find God through contact with their own world; Christianity is revealed in the objective world of history as the impact of a new way of life that is objectively real, upon individual Christians. Becoming a Christian does not mean a change in the individual. Psychology reveals how little change takes place. It means identification with an already existing community (not an institution, institutions are used by communities) which carries the values of a higher order of life. It means sharing and participating in these values, which have come from God.

Two things stand out from Morrison's experience. The first is that if he took so long reaching conviction about the objectivity of God, the masses in the new age ahead will require intelligible guidance in adjusting to a scientific culture. The second is the way in which Morrison's conception of Christianity as history parallels the theology of Paul Tillich, and hence can be on speaking terms, at least, with Barthianism. The





closing sentence of the quotation on the preceding page could be construed as a terse summary of the main emphasis of the "existential" theologians. (See Ch. XII). Kierkegaard and Rufus Jones's definitions of the individual are identical: "The synthesis of finite-infinite and temporal-eternal elements", however much they are at variance as far as the content of the definition is concerned.

Dim foreshadowings of an ecumenical theology are beginning to appear.

Dr. Morrison's idea that the Christian community is the concrete vehicle of God's word in history brings to mind the theology of Dr. William Adams Brown. For if Dr. Morrison has grasped the importance of redefining the historical place of the church from the standpoint of the religious interpretation of history, Dr. Brown's whole life has been a practical struggle to awaken the institutional church to a realization of its ecumenical calling in a divided world.

Dr. Brown, like Dr. Jones, looks back over half a century of unremitting labour in the Christian church. One of the pioneers on behalf of modernism he had no trouble in accepting science from the start, and defined his own life as concerned with "Seeking beliefs that matter".<sup>1</sup> Theology helped to define beliefs that make a difference for life.<sup>2</sup>



Science and philosophy were tools in the search and the process of definition and could not in themselves create new beliefs. His study of the creeds to discover whether they contained beliefs that mattered,

"Convinced (him) that at the heart of all the great Christian creeds were affirmations concerning reality which I believed to be of the highest practical importance. But these affirmations were couched in a language taken from the thought of a bygone day and needed constant restatement and re-definition in the light of the knowledge of the present."<sub>1</sub>

Typically American are the two convictions which have stayed by W. A. Brown through life:

"First, the conviction that religion is man's response in conscious acts of worship and service to reality with which he is in first-hand contact, even during the times when he is unaware of that contact. Secondly, that the satisfying proof of the existence of this reality and the fact of this contact is the transformation which it makes possible in the lives which it effects."<sub>2</sub>

Along with these he held to the idea of what he termed "the creative experience", the thought that God brings new life to men and women as a creative spirit in their lives.

Out of a conviction that the historic churches possessed an inner unity, a certain quality of spirit in common, he has worked for church union and continues to do so today.<sub>3</sub> He found the cause for division in the fact that the church is set in a world in which everything is alive, growing, adjusting and changing, and that the

---

1. C. A. T. 11, p. 80. 2. C. A. T. 11, p. 67. 3. BROWN 2, p. 102





process takes place at a varying tempo according to the capacities of those who have to make the adjustment.<sup>1</sup> It is not division that troubles him in the church, but that divisions "reflect and perpetuate attitudes which hinder spiritual fellowship and inhibit common action. The primary question is the possibility, more than this, the reality of a common Christian life."<sup>2</sup> Brown believes there is such a common life and that such a unifying faith is possible.

But in this area too his test is still the fruits in living. When we have come to clarity on the two points, that results are the one sure test of religion and that the eternal speaks in the familiar experiences of every day, he says we shall be able to approach ecumenical problems sanely. For, there is "something wrong in any theory of the church which involves us in such a palpable contradiction....that it should be difficult to find a place in the reunited church for free groups like the Friends....who by common consent have most signally manifested those fruits of character which our

---

1. IBID p. 233.

2. IBID p. ix.



Lord made his test of discipleship."<sup>1</sup>

Since Dr. Brown's life has been spent in the practical application of the convictions he still holds it has not been necessary to describe his spiritual pilgrimage. The element of prophecy his life offers for the future is that his own guiding principles will be an integral part of American theology: (1) seek the beliefs that matter according as they yield fruits in living, and (2) seek the reunited fellowship of all those who are brothers in the spirit of Christ.

---

1. BROWN 3 p. 396. Quaker groups are beginning to ask for membership in the World Council of Churches. Philadelphia Quakers recently requested their general conference to inquire of the World Council concerning "any form of association which may be required for a religious body which, never having required of its members the acceptance of any formula of belief, holds that the basis of fellowship is an inward experience and that the essentials of unity are the love of God and the love of man, conceived and practised in the Spirit of Christ". (CHRISTIAN CENTURY April 10, 1940.) It is apparent that no real unity can be based upon a creedal formulation, nor upon church order or policy such as the Anglican episcopacy. The secretary of the World Council has stated that the suggested basis..."I believe in Jesus Christ as God and Saviour"...is not a creedal test, and "that the Council will therefor not concern itself with the manner in which the churches interpret its content" (CHRISTENDOM, Winter 1939, p. 25) In spite of this many American and continental liberals have been so alienated by it they are asking whether or not liberal Christianity is construed by its authors as belonging to the UNA SANCTA. (CHRISTENDOM, Spring 1939, p. 229) The liberals, for their part, believe the UNA SANCTA, in its formal structure, should embrace "all who profess and call themselves Christians." (IBID p. 236)





These two principles, the insistence upon the objective reality of revelation as history, the four liberal emphases,<sup>1</sup> and increasing concern with a metaphysics that assumes the validity of the scientific method and of democracy of some sort in their own spheres --such are the diverse elements that will be welded together to form American theology. In them are found the attitudes that furnish Americans with pathways to the reality of God.

Nowhere else is it so evident that Christianity is not a single, static essence, but rather the Christianities of Peter, Augustine, Anselm, Luther, Edwards, Barth, Wieman and so forth. But the very "untraditionalism" of American theology will contribute much towards the formation of an ecumenical mind. At the moment the 'Marching Orders' issued to almost every school of American thought are: (1) Formulate those beliefs and practises which will make for real, and not formal, fellowship of all the Christians and all the Christianities, and (2) Define the supr-human, trans-experiential God in terms of his concrete, objectively historical manifestations in and to the lives of individuals, groups and nations.

---

1. SUPRD p. 20.





Americans, some will say, have yet to possess vital convictions about their own churches, not to speak of the Church Universal, a living experience of God, much less a consciousness of the objective reality of his presence as history. This is true, but the period of social change into which society is launched demands a frame of reference beyond the flow of immediate events, for its guidance; and in addition, an unambiguous conviction about the function of the Church Universal in such a changing world<sup>1</sup>

An old order is passing and a new is being born. Those beliefs will be meaningful to Christians that make this travail of history meaningful; that theology will be vital which clearly enunciates God's judgments upon the work of reconstruction in which everyone will participate; and that conception of the church will endure which serves to mediate to men the meaning of the new life which has caught them up in its passage from eternity.

Men's search for abundant life in twentieth century America is taking the form of a desire for a different good and a more objectively-defined God than those he had known at the beginning of this period. Having

---

1. Cf. MILLER.



actually shaped history out of the immediately available and obviously observable materials which lay at hand, the American now requires a vision of forces and materials not so immediate and not so obvious. The forces (the Kingdom) are always at hand, as those with eyes to see have proclaimed from time to time; if Dr. Morrison is correct, and I believe he is, the theology of tomorrow is opening its eyes to a vision of the Kingdom and of the presence of God upon the plane of history.

The danger of the new vision is that it may blind men's eyes to God's presence in the psychological, that is, in personal experience. However, the hope of the future rests in the tension American Christianity may be able to maintain between its vision of the God who rules in history, the God who lives in Jesus and all Christ-like personalities, and the empirically verifiable God who engages with men in the actual task of building the kingdom of heaven on earth. The promise of American theology, one might venture to say, the promise of American civilization, is the new life which may be released into the future through this high glimpse of God's relationship to man.

To the ecumenical movement the American hope has much to contribute. As far as an American-European rapprochement is concerned, there is possibility for





mutual understanding within the concept of Christianity as history, and in the search for a new Christian metaphysics which that involves. In the next two chapters the background of German Protestantism, and the "existential" theology which has arisen out of it, are described. For, like the American, German theology bears the ineradicable marks of its own environment.



BIBLIOGRAPHY CH. 1X

Reference  
Title:

- AUBREY, M.E., "American and British Christianity Compared", CHRISTENDOM, Winter 1940.
- BROWN, W.A., "Beliefs That Matter", New York, Scribners, 1930.
- BROWN 2, W.A., "The Church Catholic and Protestant", New York, Scribners, 1935. \*
- BROWN 4 W.A., "Christian Theology In Outline", New York, Scribners, 1914.
- BUCKHAM, J.W., review of "New Faith For Old; An Autobiography" by Shailer Mathews, JOURNAL OF RELIGION, April 1937.
- BROWN 3, W.A. "The Contribution of America to Ecumenical Theology", two articles in THE JOURNAL OF RELIGION, July and October, 1938. \*
- C. A. T., "Contemporary American Theology", 2 Vol., edited by V. Ferm: with contributions from Ames, Brown, Lyman, McGregor, Matthews, Porter, Rall, Sullivan, Weigle, Wright, Bacon, Brightman, Buckham, Case, Garrison, Horton, Jones, Knudson, Machen, Mackintosh, Scott, Wieman; New York, Round Table Press, 1932. \*
- C. C., "How My Mind Has Changed in the Past Decade", a symposium in THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, January-October, 1939, with contributions from Hough, Macartney, Ames, McConnell, Stewart, Beaven, Stafford, Barth, Kershner, Poteat, Kern, Palmer, Bowie, Phillips, Holt, Wieman, Bennett, Harkness, Jones, Calhoun, Tittle, Luccock, Dieffenbach, Sperry, Brightman, Homrighausen, Niebuhr, Horton, Morrison. \*
- HOLT, A.E., "This Nation Under God", Chicago, Willett, Clarke & Co., 1939. \*
- HORTON, W.M., "Contemporary English Theology" (See Ch. 11)
- HORTON 2, W.M., "A Psychological Approach to Theology" (See Ch. VII)



- HORTON 3, W.M., "Realistic Theology", New York, Harpers, 1934. \*
- HORTON 4, W.M., "Theism and the Modern Mood", Harpers, 1930.
- HORTON 5, W.M., "The Realistic Movement in America", CONGREGATIONAL QUARTERLY, July, 1935.
- HORTON 6, W.M., "Revelation", a symposium, London, Faber & Faber Ltd., 1937. \*
- JONES, R.M., "The Testimony of the Soul", New York, Macmillans, 1936. \*
- LIGON, E.M., "The Psychology of Christian Personality", New York, Macmillan, 1936.
- MORRISON, C.C. "Christianity as History", CHRISTENDOM, Summer, 1939. \*
- NELSON, R.W., "The Supernatural is Natural", CHRISTENDOM, Summer, 1939.
- MILLER, F., (with Rich. Niebuhr & Pauck), "The Church Against the World", Chicago, Willett & Clarke Co., 1935.
- NIEBUHR, R., "Reflections On The End Of An Era", New York, Scribners, 1934.
- NIEBUHR 2, R., "Moral Man And Immoral Society", New York, Scribners, 1932.
- NIEBUHR 3, R., "An Interpretation Of Christian Ethics", New York, Harpers, 1935.
- NIEBUHR 4, R., "Beyond Tragedy", Scribners, 1938.
- PATTON, F.L., "Fundamental Christianity", New York, Macmillan, 1926.
- WIEMAN & MELAND, H.N. & B.E., "American Philosophies Of Religion", Chicago, Willett, Clark & Co., 1936.\*
- WIEMAN, H.N., "The Issues Of Life", New York, Abingdon, 1930.
- CHRISTENDOM, The Journal of the American section of the ecumenical movement.





## CHAPTER X

### BACKGROUND OF GERMAN PROTESTANTISM

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Fough-hew then how we will" (Hamlet) <sup>1</sup>

"It does harm to confound the Deity with the  
Inferior operations of his own hands" (Calvin)<sup>2</sup>

A quick survey of continental theology immediately disabuses one's mind of the illusion that here is a specific type of theology, the European, that can be gathered up and described as a system. Actually there is a bewildering variety; Lutheran, Reformed, Orthodox, Sectarian, Conservative, Progressive, Liberal, Biblical, and so on ad infinitum.

The reason Germany has been selected as representative is because it has had more influence on American thinking in the past than any other nation, and because along with Switzerland, it has been the main source for the new emphasis that does underly the great variety of European theologies. This new "existential" emphasis stresses the depth rather than the breadth of Christianity, the absolute crisis rather than the continuity of Christian living, and an "existential" rather than an empirical, psychological, ethical or immanent theology.

---

1. ACT V:Scene II

2. CALVIN I:71



One of the great differences between the American and German environments is that of complexity; the latter is very much more tangled and variegated than the former, and yet must be dealt with in summary fashion, and rather arbitrarily, under five headings:

(1) The Reformers; (2) Church and State; (3) The Nineteenth Century; (4) The Influence Of the War; and (5) The Present Situation.

(1) THE REFORMERS

Both the "Institutes" of John Calvin, and the early works of Martin Luther exhibit a world so foreign to the mind of the twentieth century that serious misunderstanding of what these works meant in the lives of their contemporaries is almost unavoidable.

The religious people of that day were convinced that the evil in the world was due to the devil having led men into "disobedience, sin, death and all misfortunes, so that God's anger and wrath lay upon men, as they deserved and merited." <sup>1</sup> The power of the Roman church rested upon this belief, and its corollary, that the church possessed the means of grace to effect release from such an unhappy state.





Luther's reformation developed out of his own failure to believe (that mass, penance, prayers, those "works which the church had taught were efficacious) were able to save his soul. The sense of despair into which he was cast issued in an experience that convinced him salvation was not to be won by works, but by knowledge of the fact that "Jesus Christ has dragged us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, freed us, and restored us to the favor and grace of God."<sup>1</sup>

Salvation became, for Luther, an objective fact grounded in Jesus Christ, rather than any efforts men might make on their own behalf. When it is remembered every one believed he was eternally damned by his own acts the emancipating power of Luther's doctrine becomes evident. Jesus had done all that was necessary to redeem men from hell. Those given grace to see this miracle of God's love in Jesus, were saved, and then benefitted from the sacramental system.

As Calvin put it, "Faith is the special gift of God in both ways--in purifying the mind so as to give it a relish for divine truth, and afterwards in establishing it therein."<sup>2</sup> The gift comes through God's word: "we could never recognize the Father's grace

---

1. LUTHER p.100

2. CALVIN II: p.136



and mercy except for our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> By nature "the children of hell", we must beware of "deriving even the minutest portion of salvation from any other quarter, save Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> Faith is produced by the effect of the Word in the Bible upon men, through the power of the Holy Spirit, without whose illumination it is helpless. So too said Luther:

"One thing, and one thing alone, is necessary for life, justification, and Christian liberty; and that is the most holy word of God, the Gospel of Christ....faith alone, and the efficacious use of the word of God bring salvation....from faith flows forth love... and outside of Christendom where the Gospel is not received, there is no forgiveness, and can be no holiness."<sup>3</sup>

All their other teachings were developed from the belief that faith, not works, leads to salvation or justification. Christianity was a personal relationship between the individual and God, the clue to which was to be found in Jesus Christ, the "mirror of his father's heart."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, "a priest should be nothing in Christendom but a functionary."<sup>5</sup>

A good portion of the teachings of the reformers is to us incomprehensible, inconsistent and primitive. But the weaknesses are derived from the society of their day, as well as from their own temperaments. Beliefs in God, sin, hell, reprobation, evil spirits, the devil,

---

1. LUTHER p.106

2. CALVIN II:50,72

3. LUTHER p.237-8, 282, 104. 4. IBID p.106

5. IBID p.165





the foreordination of every individual's status in life, and the divine obligation to obey all established authorities--none of these was changed by the reformation. They were simply put into a new setting.

In spite of the common ground of tradition and reform the differences between Calvin and Luther were sufficient to lead to political and theological conceptions which divide Christians in Germany and America in our own time. The differences spring from two diverse characters, and two different settings as between Wurtenburg and Geneva.

Luther reached his position after an agonizing struggle with his own conscience, and fearful anxiety over the salvation of his own soul. The sense of inward communion with God and the knowledge that through Jesus God's word was available to the repentant sinner, was enough for him. At first he counselled Christians they did not have to obey any higher authority than that which came from their communion with God. But before long he withdrew his advice, bewailed the absence of real Christians and reserved the application of his ideals to the time when earnest Christians should come forward.

Squabbles over attempts to set up churches; differences of opinion with some who were organizing them; and the horrifying effect of the Peasants' Revolt





upon his mind, bred in Luther a profound mistrust of the common man, and led him to lay the responsibility for church reform, discipline and government in the hands of the territorial princes. While it is true this did not take place during his life, his utterances could not be construed in any other way.

Luther's struggle for assurance led to a rock-like conviction that salvation existed in Jesus for the elect. Unlike Calvin it did not produce in him an overweening confidence that he himself was one of the elect. The duty of the individual was to listen to the Word and cultivate inner communion with God. Later, this attitude ripened in a Lutheranism confined to the middle-class, completely subservient to civil authority and content with a quietistic attitude towards the world's problems which Luther would probably have condemned.

Calvin, a humanist and a jurist, unperturbed by the struggle that raged in the heart of an Augustine or a Luther, carried the dogma of justification by faith to its logical conclusion, predestination.<sup>1</sup> For, "if grace is not bestowed on all promiscuously, and since those only begin to ask whom heavenly grace inspires....

---

1. CALVIN II:528f.



then it is plainly owing to the mere pleasure of God that salvation is spontaneously offered to some, while<sup>1</sup> others have no access to it."

It follows from this, he says, that the marks of the elect are "confidence" and "security" in their faith,<sup>2</sup> which is "certain and indubitable." Such faith in themselves caused Calvin's Genevan followers to attempt to cut the pattern of their world to that prescribed in scripture. Unlike Luther's Germany, where the territorial princes were just rising to power, Switzerland had for some time been accustomed to a form of republicanism under which laymen held powers of government. Calvin's own legal abilities allied themselves with the governmental habits of the Swiss to create a church in which bourgeoisie laymen had the lion's share of control.

Calvinism, consequently, fostered an activist spirit that still marks its most theological adherents, and a power making for liberty and political equality which has set the wheels of many revolutions turning, since the death of its founder. In some ways this has been due to historical accident. Wherever Calvinism found itself in a minority its resistance to authority

---

1. IBID I:351, II:528

2. IBID II:93





became strong and aggressive and, in the process of attaining its own demands, democratic forms of governments were established. Wherever it was in the majority, as in New England, a tyrannical theocracy was set up. The reason for this paradox was the current belief that political authority was sacred (the reformation did not alter that), and that feeling of confidence with which the elect were imbued whenever they applied Calvin's postscript to his teachings on civil authority: "We are subject to men who rule over us, but subject only in the Lord. If they command anything against Him let us not pay the least regard to it."<sup>1</sup>

To sum up. Both Luther and Calvin accepted the mediaeval theological system of their day. All they challenged was the method of salvation. And the theory of the two founders that salvation was rooted in the personal relationship of the individual to God, than which nothing was higher in the world, was violated by their followers in practice. Calvinism asserted that the primary belief in Christianity was belief in the absolute, unbending sovereignty of God. Lutheranism as sternly insisted on the primacy of belief in inner communion.

---

1. IBID III:534,553.



Luther originally did not intend to found a new church. But his new teaching, "sola fide," met the needs of the German people who had been schooled by the mediaval mystics to find their peace and rest in an inner world, removed from the gloomy universe which they saw when they looked around them. The legacy left the new church from Luther's teachings was drawn from his later work and was composed of a spirit of quietism, and a set of beliefs. The latter, in summary, asserted that man, at first created upright and afterwards not partially but totally ruined, finds his entire salvation outside of himself in Jesus Christ, who has been freely given by God to reveal in a world otherwise dark and wrath-stricken, the love that is in the divine heart for men. Lutheranism, not Calvinism, has dominated German theology until today.

(ii) CHURCH AND STATE.

Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers should have deprived the church hierarchy of many of its privileges and freed the church itself from superior authority. As a matter of fact it was exactly one hundred years after the first Amendment to the American constitution that any German political party dared to take into its platform the principle



there established, that religion was a private matter. The Anabaptists and the Calvinists organized their churches democratically, but Luther's disillusionment with the common man made him renounce his earlier ideals, argue that men were only equal before God and not before their fellows, and that civil authority must be obeyed save when it extends into the hearts of its subjects.

This teaching dominated and still dominates the German churches, which became state churches soon after Luther's death. In the 17th century German Pietism raised its voice on behalf of a democratic church. But by that time democracy was tarred with the same brush as the much detested Calvinism and Spener and his followers were harried out of the country by the State at the request of the church leaders. Similarly, the "Law of Nature" theory propagated by Rousseau, also evoked the hostility of the Lutheran ecclesiastics who saw in it another attempt to subvert good government. They remembered the Peasants' Revolt and Luther's attitude to it, and felt that anything which would undermine the monarch's authority was too dangerous to be trifled with.

Religious freedom was enjoyed in large part under Frederick the Great, although this liberal monarch retained the controlling reins of church government in





his own hands. All this was swept away by the Religious Edict of 1778 by which Frederick William II hoped to initiate a plan of church reform which went so far as to dictate the liturgy for the various denominations.<sup>1</sup> The result was that during the nineteenth century the kings used the churches as instruments for preventing the rise of democratic ideals. When a nominal democracy was set up in Prussia in 1851 the king took his authority away from the church with one hand and imposed it again with the other; as *praecipium membrum* he retained his episcopal authority and continued to direct church affairs by means of orders issued from his cabinet through the office for church activities. One of the church ministers, Altenstein, reviewing his long term of service under the king, says:

"..It is my chief joy that I have revered in your Majesty the determinate instrument of divine providence whose utterances became my convictions when my own intentions led me in another direction or on another course."<sup>2</sup>

In the struggle for democracy which took place in the latter half of the century the orthodox sided with the king, thus further alienating the common people. They, since Luther's repudiation of the Peasants' revolt, had felt, according to Schliermarcher, that the church was a yoke imposed on them by the military monarchy.



The church rapidly earned the reputation of being both the ally and the servant of the absolute state. In fact, so ingrained were its submissive habits, the state in the years 1860-1876 actually had to force the introduction of presbyteries and synods, in a move towards nominal democracy which it made in both political and religious spheres to solidify the support of public opinion behind the monarchy. The favor shown by the government to the Evangelical church was increasingly denounced up to the War, but both bodies found the arrangement of mutual support too congenial to be dropped.<sup>1</sup> In the church the state had a propaganda machine which instilled patriotism into the citizenry and opposed both Roman Catholicism and Social Democracy. From the state the church received financial and political security.

What have been the results of this imperialism, erastianism and traditionalism in German Protestantism? In the first place it has meant that the Evangelical church has never been a people's church. Continental labour movements have been notoriously anti-Christian as compared with similar groups in England and America. The Social Gospel received little support from this German state church.

---

1. Cf. LEMPP p. 102, "The state is the best protector of freedom within the church."





Secondly, the ideal of passive non-resistance and absolute obedience blinded the church to the realities of social movements in Germany. The most striking example of this is the complete ignorance of the menace of Nazism, displayed by the German churches during the 1920's and 1930's. In crisis after crisis church leaders failed to see the issues at stake. They had only to ask a member of the large Social Democrat party for political advice, which, if taken might quite possibly have produced a different Germany today. For the church groups, hesitating, finally threw their forces in with the Nazis- expecting to avoid a social revolution thereby. They caught a Tartar! but remained oblivious of it until the Nazis interfered with their own private worship. In spite of it all, most of them still can say, "Political motives are not the church's affair."

Thirdly, restriction of liberty along with Luther's teaching has given rise to a theology of feeling, based upon the private feelings of the individual rather than any authority, history, science or even ethics. Luther's method of salvation, faith, has been elevated to take the place of the goal.

Fourthly, the disastrous habit of political submission expressed in the slogan, "Throne and Altar Against Revolution!" was expanded into a quietism that covered all of religious living.



Luther's belief that the sole function of the<sup>1</sup> church was to present the word, was taken literally. Here the greatest contrast between Lutheranism and Calvinism is manifest: "Lutheranism endures the world in suffering, pain and martyrdom, Calvinism masters it for the glory of God."<sup>2</sup>

Fifthly, the legalistic veneration of Luther, along with the long history of state control has made the majority of Christian Germans, of the Lutheran church particularly, very conservative in their theology as well as in their social outlook. And in the present crisis it has driven many progressively minded people into the ranks of the "German Christians."

In the next section the reaction against 19th century subjectivism is described. But even the correction of the church's confusion of Luther's method with Luther's goal and object of worship was done within the framework of a church-state civilization. The latter condition is one of the main reasons why Americans, living in a secular age, find it difficult to understand German theology.

---

1. Cf. TROELTSCHp. 70, "Its aim is simply to place the pure word of God on the candlestick..."

2. IBID p.84



(iii) THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the nineteenth century the cultural life of Germany steered a dialectical path between the rationalism of the previous century and the evolutionary idealism of Hegel, the monistic materialism of Feurbach and Haeckel and the strident volitionalism of Nietzsche. Rationalism, idealism, naturalism and finally a new kind of romanticism - each in their turn dominated the thought of this philosophically-inclined nation.

By 1800 orthodoxy in the churches had almost vanished and religion had become either a kind of rationalistic naturalism, or pietism. Then the great reactionary movement of the Congress of Vienna post-Napoleonic era expelled the forces of rationalism from pulpit, church government and theological college. Orthodoxy was again intrenched in the strongholds of the orthodox and in the lives of the really religious people, and the German church was made up of extremely conservative laymen and ministers from that time on.

One of the results of this was that national culture stood over against the churches. From the time of Kant and Goethe the educated in Germany - whether they followed these latter two Schiller, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Marx, Geuerbach, or Nietzsche--remained hostile to organized religion and to the supernaturalism they associated with it.





At the beginning of this period Goethe and Schiller turned away from the church and helped, with Kant and Hegel, to demolish this supernaturalism. Midway through the century classical idealism was itself overthrown by the materialism of Feuerbach, Marx and the young Hegelians. Because the churches as distinct from the theological colleges, clung to the old traditionalism, the socialism formed in this struggle became sharply anti-Christian:

"In reading the criticisms of the socialists and in discussing religious problems with them one finds that very few attack religion--- the life in and through God---what they usually attack is certain dogmas, or alleged historical facts, or the attitude of some ministers. The real experience of faith they have apparently never know at all."<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the masses in the '70's and '80's read Strauss and Haeckel, took the clergy at their word when they declared science and religion to be irreconcilable, and were even further alienated from the churches.

Such naturalism was allied with the spirit of a rapidly expanding economy. Under the leadership of Bismark Germans were engaged building a new state, and his faith in brute force gained more and more ascendancy as the new nation experienced the first thrills of a united nationalism:



"Have a care ' cried Mommsen to his constituents at Halle, ' lest in this country which has been at once a power in arms and a power in intelligence, the intelligence should vanish, and nothing but the pure military state remain.' 'Everything is falling to pieces, ' wrote the aged Ranke; 'no one thinks of anything but commerce and money.'"1

Unprecedented public activity, industrial growth, and belief that social improvement depended upon imperialist expansion; the entrance of the state into the fields of health, working conditions, sanitation, and social reform; the sudden prosperity of the great middle classes; the development of parliamentary government; --all these forces contrived to make Germany a world power, a bourgeois state, and an admirer of a shallow political and philosophical realism.

Germany was going through what England and America had experienced many years before. Her industrial revolution took place in an almost mediaval structure of church and state; the latter was venerated by people and philosophy alike as the supreme loyalty of loyalties.

The realistic culture of the latter half of the century, which was based upon the natural sciences, heaped scorn on the "theories and illusions" of the philosophers and the theologians. Facts, scientific and human, replaced the philosophy, art, theoretical science and moral categories which to various of the





classical idealists had represented the highest things in life. The clergy, some of whom began by preaching a stirring social gospel, came to believe that because politics was a struggle for power the pure light of the gospel could have little influence in that sphere.

Lempp calculates that society at this time was divided into four classes--the Conservatives, mainly Protestant, middle class and peasant; the Liberals--the intelligents, more or less indifferent to institutional religion, although not to religion as such; the Catholics; and the Social Democrats--hostile to Christianity.

From the liberal group came theologians who tried to mediate between the dogmatic orthodoxy of the bourgeoisie Protestants, the indifferantism of the intelligentsia, and the militant agnosticism of the laboring classes and their leaders. Schliermarcher, Strauss, Baur, Ritschl, Harnack and others took the best fruits of German culture and put Germany theology in undisputed leadership of the Protestant world.

Schliermarcher rationalized Hegel and taught that the chief characteristic of the relationship of man to God was a feeling of dependence. Strauss, Baur and the Tübingen school of biblical critics undermined the belief in a literally inspired bible. Ritschl solved



the problem of the great gulf between science and religion, culture and Christianity, by placing them in two separate categories. Natural science, he said, deals with fact, theology and religion with value.

Towards the last years of the eighties a new spirit began to emerge. A movement took place very similar to that which arose from the disillusionment of the depression period in America some forty years afterwards. Men everywhere voiced their dissatisfaction with science and technology alone, with a decadent art, with a barren naturalism, and with the commercial spirit of capitalism. Carlyle, Ruskin, Insen, Tolstoi, Nietzsche raised their voices in the spirit of Kierkegaard and by 1910 Lempp is writing:

"The new spirit is called neo-romanticism, or mysticism, or symbolism...it is not a definite type of culture but only a great striving... the question: How can the soul find the eternal, has driven all others into the background. The old broad faith in the sufficiency of secular culture is deeply shaken. Men had believed that this faith would make life rich and man great, and it turns out that on the contrary it has made our life small and poor."<sup>1</sup>

The scholastic dogmas of the conservatives, and  
the unsatisfying teaching<sup>2</sup> of the liberal theologians were unveiled as theoretical toys, fashioned in and for

---

1. LEMPP p. 118

2. The brilliant development of biblical criticism issued in confusion of method and goal. In concern for historical fact the professors appeared to the ordinary man to have lost interest in salvation.



the leisure of a comfortable middle class society. The reasonable world of inevitable progress was doomed, and the doom was foreshadowed by this neo-romaniticism which was capable of absorbing the emotional and volitional as well as the intellectual energies of the masses. From it also came the irrational mysticism and "folk culture" that has gripped the German people in Nazism. During this period, reports Lempp, thirteen different "teutonic" religions sprang up in one year; and Harnack's "What is Christianity" went through five editions in the same course of time.

In 1910, Germany was experiencing a great religious longing, a longing for a deeper reality than the one revealed by the factual description of the sciences or the philistine pleasures of capitalist society. Orthodox Christianity was unable to meet this need because the old supernaturalism was gone forever.<sup>1</sup> The theologians tried - Ritschl by separating culture from religion, Troeltsch by basing religion on a religious a' priori common to all men; and Eucken by affirming the reality of a transcendental spiritual life that enters into natural experience. But culture and

---

1. LEMPP p.121





and religion remained unadjusted, and the longing of the people unsatisfied.

Lempp concludes his article with the hope that this adjustment will materialize and a new age dawn for German Christianity. His position is symbolic of the German situation. Like the majority of his fellow Lutherans he agreed with the dismissal of politics and the demand for a free church as subjects not worthy of the mature consideration of theologians. The consequent alienation of nearly three-quarters of the nation, the trivialities in the performance of which such a church was engaged, and the worship of the state that never disappeared, were major factors in the development of post-war German theology.

From the strictly cultural viewpoint philosophy and theology were handicapped by the same limitation. Perhaps it is the height of audacity to sum up a 100 years of such cultural brilliance for criticism, but it does seem apparent that its one-sidedness was responsible for its collapse. German thinkers interpreted reality in terms of only one aspect of human consciousness, usually the intellect or the feelings, sometimes the will and as in the extremist, Stirner, the individual ego itself. They were occupied in raising their various



interpretations to the level of deity. Few heeded the voice of Marx, "Philosophers have interpreted the world, our business is to change it." Marx himself was cursed by the one-sidedness from which he drew his inspiration. And his contemporary, Kierkegaard of Denmark, was plagued by the same limitation in his astute dialectical demonstration of the objectivity of a reality that was not just present in the consciousness of the individual, but confronted him with its searching and discomfoting demands.

Over against this cultural anthropomorphism stood the orthodox church and natural science, the former idolizing an older anthropomorphism (tradition and Luther), and the latter confusing a method for dealing with life, with reality itself. It is little wonder that Karl Barth was moved to cry out that the principles of the reformers were meant to be used in living, not enshrined in a temple, and to write his books from the text, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me!"

(iv) THE INFLUENCE OF THE WAR.

The effect of the first Great War upon the German nation has not yet run its course. Unlike many of the other participants Germany did not forget the war. Disillusioned by her own failure which she had scarcely





conceived to be possible, and by the peace settlement, Germany isolated herself from the world and began to build anew.

The War taught the German religious world at least two things. It verified the pre-war common man's doubt of science and the claim that the world could be rationally controlled, a doubt which had gathered significant proportions by the time war broke out. In the war they learned by hard experience that life was not known when it was set down in text books and that history went on independent of one's personal will. Science was revealed as an instrument of neither progress or prosperity, but a tool that could be used with devastating consequence to bring about defeat and tragedy. Living became more important than knowledge.

Secondly, for the first time they really came to know the meaning of a united Germany, and of dependence upon the state for the very existence of individual lives. Sectionalism and class differences received telling blows in both the war and the revolution that followed it.

The latter, especially, shocked the conservative church; Martin Rade's experience is typical:



"At Easter in 1917....Professor Wernle asked me whether I did not regard the abdication of the Kaiser and revolution as possibilities... 'Inconceivable', I answered. It never entered our heads to raise any question concerning the permanence of the government. Least of all could such a thought be entertained in church circles, for the evangelical national church felt itself most intimately united with the political organization in the land, with the king and the government, felt itself supported by it and pledged its support."<sup>1</sup>

How insulated such a church was from society!

In January, 1919 a communist coup d'etat failed because of inadequate leadership; and a month later the Wiemar Assembly elected Freiderich Ebert as president of the republic. Ebert, an ex-saddler from Heidleberg, in his oath of office declared himself to be "a son of the working class, grown up in the world of socialistic ideas."<sup>2</sup>

The horror the orthodox felt at the incursion of this new world of ideas into the sphere of government, received ample confirmation in their own eyes when the new government laid plans for the gradual emancipation of the churches from state control, and the elimination<sup>3</sup> of religious instruction from the schools. Too feeble

---

1. RADE p. 352

2. LANGSAM p. 374

3. In 1921 no less than 246,302 Lutherans became professed atheists; and millions left the churches for ever.



to be set adrift on their own the Protestant churches were set free by a long process of gradual change that had not been completed when Nazism swept into power.

The hostility these changes, and the desertion of membership, aroused was enhanced in later years when the Lutherans were able to blame the new regime for the iniquities of the Versailles settlement and the depression which followed. The latter threw a large number of white collared workers, hundreds of thousands of civil servants, and many university students out of employment. These groups came from the class among whom the Lutheran church was strong, and it was their ballots which helped to turn the tide in support of Hitlerism during the 1930's.

The final result in the lives of the older generation of religious folk was despair, distrust of the new Social Democratic government, and an even firmer fixation in their orthodoxy. They blamed the failure of the war on the previous century of God-less liberalism, and the chaos of the moment on the power of God-less socialism. Spengler, Keyserling, Remarque, and a host of other novelists and playwrights reflect the despair and frustration of the middle-aged and older people whose hopes were blasted by the war and the new world which was growing out of it.





The younger generation reacted differently. Peace was for them a chance to rectify the mistakes of their fathers. Their protest was made not only against the older generation but against the whole over-industrialized and mechanized culture of pre-war life:

"Young Germany sought its exemplars in old Germany when life was simpler, and before the creative impulses of the citizen were overlaid by the idolatry of the state. Though the movement sought to renew contact with the past, it was not reactionary, for it paid homage to the spirit, not for the form, of an earlier age."<sup>1</sup>

The pre-war liberalism which had claimed the universe lay within the limits of man's comprehension was laughed out of court. Unlike the United States, where "the iron has entered but little into the collective soul", Germany knows that it is impossible to give a rational explanation of the nature of the world.

If the war taught the younger generation that life was a serious struggle against an irrational and mysterious world, it also taught them the values of comradeship and the validity of the claims of the nation, mentioned above. Individuals counted for little when the defense of their group (not a mechanized

---

1. LANGSAM p. 389



culture-pattern), of the supra-personal values resident in the nation upon which the individual depended for his life - was at stake.<sup>1</sup>

Group loyalty and renaissance of the ancient "German" virtues, as distinct from those of the rest of Western civilization, led to the formation of the great Youth Movement with its Protestant, Catholic, Nationalist, Socialist and Pacifist sections. And also to agitation for a "German" church and "German" Christianity in which the Old Testament features of orthodoxy would be omitted.

The whole nation required a religious explanation of the War and of the destiny of their race. This religious longing, present before the conflict, was accentuated in the purging experience of the war itself. The Youth Movement, Nazism and Communism met success because they did provide religious answers to the problems of existence. They explained life in terms of supra-mundane principles--the Nation, the Historical Process, the Folk--which called forth the loyalty and the whole personal obedience of their members. The

---

1. Piper makes this wise comment a propos of anti-semitism in Germany, "If today National Socialism is fighting so bitterly against Marxism and Jews, its followers are not inspired only by political motives, but by the feeling that they are fighting against the dark powers of evil in an apocalyptic struggle."





Germans had learned in the war that each moment of life was pregnant with the issues of life and death; these movements continued that situation by making each moment significant for the life of their nation or for humanity.

To conclude: the war gave the final coup de grace to liberal theology in Germany. Its intellectualism and individualism could not satisfy the need of German Christians for an explanation of the tragedy, nor provide a basis upon which to live in the post-war world. Piper, one of the younger generation from whose ranks the dialectical theologians have come, sums it up in a phrase, "Difficulties which concern the whole life of men cannot be solved by theories, but only by recommending a new attitude by which they can<sup>1</sup> be faced."

This new attitude was found, for Christians, in a revival of reformation theology. Theology became "existential" - concerned with the individual as an "existent" human being, rather than as a set of feelings, or thoughts or impulses, and with the individual's concrete problems rather than general abstract laws.

---

1. PIPER p. 51



Religion was the attempt to grasp reality, as such, not man's thought about it. The bible, for example was to be read as a "book of life" and not as a document of religious history. "By the 'existential attitude' man does not study the Bible as an historical document; he relates it to his own salvation."<sup>1</sup>

In the new theology that developed creeds were construed as attempts to express essential spiritual experience and man's task to see the divine realities they stand for. Doctrine became central, rather than history, religious living and relationship to God, rather than knowledge. Jesus was interpreted as the divine event by which all other events are to be judged, and by which the completely sovereign, mysterious, and otherwise wrathful God is known.

Some of the specific viewpoints of the "existential" theologians are to be outlined in the next chapter. It must be apparent, and understandable, from the events described in this, that the new beliefs and theologies grew up to meet the needs of German Christians for the word of life in a world of darkness.

---

1. IBID p.63



(v) THE PRESENT SITUATION

The Nazi revolution was not merely a change of political or economic organization; like all institutions it was the result of an explosion, an explosion of the accumulated collective subconscious will to power and to life of the whole people. Tired of the glittering generalities of individualism and the economic instabilities of free capitalism, Germany sought meaningful existence in a group effort at self-realization. The effort was nourished by the irrational dynamism of writers such as Nietzsche, Gergson, Sorel, Chamberlain, Rosenberg and Hitler...its medium of expression was not idea, but myth: Hegel's phrase, "the real is the rational" was supplanted in popular affection by Rosenberg's title, "The Myth Of The Twentieth Century."

At first thousands of Christians welcomed the revolution for the new life which it instilled into the nation, and for the promise of economic stability which it held out. At first too, for reasons that have been indicated, they believed the new government's assurances of its paternalistic interest in the Christian religion. But Hitler had learned his political principles was the necessity for a unified loyalty to the state.





As soon as he dared he began to carry out in practice what he had set down in theory years before:

"One really cannot serve two masters. I consider the foundation or the destruction of a religion essentially more important than the foundation or destruction of a state, let alone a party."<sup>1</sup>

As Hitler moved to destroy orthodoxy and set up his own state religion, Barth and a minority of Protestant leaders protested, and warned the Fuhrer they could not tolerate interference with church affairs. Years later Barth said that he had always hated Nazism but did not believe it was the church's business to fight it until it was given a chance to prove itself.

In the present situation a section of the church has taken its stand because the government has clamped down and tried to orientate it to "teutonic" methods and goals. Many theologians are in exile; and many professors and pastors are in prison. The "Confessional" branch of the church, as those who resisted have been called, has taken its stand on the principles of the reformation, and defied the state to place loyalty to itself above loyalty to the Word.

---

1. HITLER p.148



Political and academic groups have yielded to the Nazis or gone underground, but the Confessional Church continues to preach its message, "Obey God rather than man." It is significant that the churches took no action until their own peculiar function of witnessing to the Word was interfered with. This, as has been pointed out, is in line with Lutheran tradition.

For example, many Lutherans sympathized with antisemitism as a theory, although deploring the methods used in forwarding it, until the government tried to force Jews out of their congregations. Such weakness of social vision was a direct cause contributing to the defeatism, discouragement and despair out of which Nazism was born. Similar obtuseness caused them to vote for Hitler at the polls. Democracy in Germany was sabotaged not only by the uncooperative actions of France and England, not only by a weak tradition of responsible government; and not only by the consequences of the world depression, but also by the political ignorance and apathy of millions of German Protestants who now wish they had known better.

The same characteristically Lutheran blindness to political issues is evident in the new totalitarian theology. On the whole it too isolates religion from





politics and argues that forms of government are not the concern of theology or the church. Worse still, the churches actually blame the democrats for the conditions which made Nazism possible. Democracy is too weak to carry on government successfully if they charge they level, apparently unconscious of their own role in producing that weakness.

Totalitarianism has not only pushed the churches back to a totalitarian theology, it has outlawed or jailed the majority of liberal spirits in Germany itself. Speaking of the present war R. R. Fosdick of the Rockefeller Foundation, said recently, "Military necessities are creating an 'intellectual blackout' in Europe which threatens incalculable harm to future generations." <sup>1</sup> While all European countries are suffering (for example, the universities of London and Paris have been decimated), those under German control have been either closed down or transformed to suit the purposes of the present regime. An 'intellectual blackout' threatens totalitarianism and cultural decadence of major proportions in Germany. And German

---

1. NEW YORK TIMES, March 28th, 1940.



theology cannot hope to be the exception. The liberal and scientific spirit is being killed and the lights of Germany, if not of Europe, to paraphrase Sir Edward Frey, actually do ("not out") but to America:

"It may turn out that Hitler and Mussolini will be the great builders of American universities. At the University of Chicago hardly a department from Art to Zoology has failed to benefit from the determined ignorance of the totalitarian regimes."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of all this Dr. Frey can still write "Political motives are not the church's affair."<sup>2</sup> He believes the resistance of the Confessional Churches to be based on the reformation dogma which they uphold. Perhaps it is. But from a distance it is pardonable to suggest that any other dogma--say that of the universal (not merely Aryan) brotherhood of men under one Father--held as absolutely and tenaciously, could have performed the same function.

The term "function" brings to mind one of the basic principles of ecumenism, the principle that beliefs are crystallized forms of the living of particular groups of men. Consequently they will vary with the variation in ways of living of men.

Should American Christians be driven to the position of the Germans the belief that would function to keep

---

1. HUTCHINS p. 17

2. FREY. p.223



up their faith and courage, and to compel their unshirking loyalty above all other loyalties, would necessarily be one that had been meaningful in their own history. Their "confession" would embrace a different set of terms.

The Germans, accustomed to authoritarianism, to state domination, and to a long tradition of Lutheranism find their opposition to repression best consolidated, and their faith in Christianity best sustained, by fixing their attention and loyalty upon an absolute dogma about the revelation of God stated in sixteenth century terms. The functional value of their confession cannot be questioned. What Americans do question is whether or not German Christianity has responded to the new life, to the revelation of God which modern history has carried into its life. In return, the Europeans wonder whether the Americans have responded to that revelation in terms of its historical fullness, in terms that is, of the living message of past visions of God which that same history also carries.

The other basic principle of ecumenism is that the beliefs, the crystallized forms of the new life of past groups of men, must serve in the present to convey





meaning, not about the lives of those men, but also about the source of life which inspired and directed them. Barth is emphatic in asserting the principles of the past must be lived, and not worshipped, and to that extent he is true to this ecumenical requirement. But it is evident from contemporary Germany that the language which much of the progressive theologians use fails to convey meaning about the unconditioned source of existence to contemporary Germans. It does convey meaning about Luther and Calvin, but not about God. This is just what the Barthians are anxious to avoid, so it is necessary now to turn to an examination of the "existential" theology that we may discover how valid this criticism is, and what the beliefs and purposes are that they uphold.



BIBLIOGRAPHY Ch. X

Reference  
Title:

- CALVIN J., "Institutes" (See Ch. XI) \*
- GRANT, A.J., "A History Of Europe", London, Methuen & Son, 1931. \*
- HICKS, G.D., "German Philosophy And The Present Crisis", HIBBERT JOURNAL, October 1914.
- HUTCHINS, R.M., "The State Of The University", Chicago, University Press, 1935.
- HITLER, A., "Mein Kampf", New York, Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939 ed.
- FREY, A., "Cross & Swastika, The Ordeal Of The German Church", London, S.C.M., 1938. \*
- KELLER, A., (See three works listed in Ch. XI.) \*
- LEMPF, R., "Present Religious Conditions In Germany", HARVARD THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, January 1910. \*
- LANGSAM, W.C., "The World Since 1914", New York, Macmillan, 1935. \*
- LUTHER, M., "Primary Works" (See Ch. XI.) \*
- MACMILLAN, K.D., "Protestantism In Germany", Princeton, Princeton University, 1917. \*
- MCCOMB, S., "Religion In Modern Germany", THE MODERN CHURCHMAN, July, 1927.
- PIPER, O., "Recent Developments In German Protestantism" (See Ch. XI.) \*
- RADE, M., "The Present Situation Of Christianity In Germany", THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY, July, 1920.
- TROELTSCH, E., "Protestantism And Progress", New York, Williams & Norgate, 1912.
- WILBUR, E.M., "Faustus Socinus, Pioneer", HIBBERT JOURNAL, July, 1935.





## CHAPTER XI

### THE "EXISTENTIAL" THEOLOGY.

"Nature, it is true, is God's work but only the work is directly present, not God."<sup>1</sup>

"The consciousness of one's eternal responsibility to be an individual is the one thing needful."<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter the seething chaos of European theology is studied. First Keirkegaard, the fountain-head and typical representative of the revolt against the nineteenth century; then Barth, Brunner and Tillich. The works available for study have been limited but were supplemented by the mass of critical literature that has been produced on European theology; the main sources are set down in the bibliography at the end of the chapter.

#### (i) SOREN KIERKEGAARD (1813 - 1855)

Three quarters of a century after his death the lonely figure of Kierkegaard, "dour and tragic, dominates<sup>3</sup> the thinking of Central Europe", and his shadow is lengthening to fall across the English and American mind as it already has the Spanish, Italian, German, French and Japanese.

The Danish thinker's agonized search for the grace of God has been compared with that of Luther, Augustine and Paul. His influence has grown rapidly of recent years and at the moment promises to outweigh that of all

---

1. LOWRIE p. 303 (quoted from Kierkegaard's "Postscript")  
2. KIERKEGAARD p. xvii    3. BERDYAEV p. 229.



but the greatest of nineteenth century writers. Against the philosophic trend of his own time, a trend that laid its stress upon the concept of the collective and the communal as the unrolling of the Absolute in time, and hence which evaluated the individual as only a momentary function of the historical process, against all of this, Kierkegaard's brilliant dialectical arguments were flung. Like Nietzsche, he was one of the few writer's of his century who did not succumb to the current utilitarian individualism in which personality withered and died, or to the romantic idealism in which the individual's significance was swallowed up in sentimental union with the whole.

Lonely himself, subjected to scathing ridicule from his critics, misunderstood, obsessed with melancholy and a guilt feeling inherited from his father, but equipped with a massive intellect and the capacity to utilize his suffering as a window open to eternity, Kierkegaard's master category was that of the individual.

An apostle of paradox and a champion of dialectic he defined human "existence" as a "synthesis of the infinite and finite, the eternal and temporal." True human "existence" is to be found, he argued, not in scientific detachment and disinterestedness but in the



"inwardness" of "self-activity", in "existential" thinking and acting, the total response of the whole human being to the totality of his environment. This existential reaction is the vocation of the individual and has been slighted by philosophy and religion. The creative "moments" of decision are pregnant with eternal possibilities. The one thing needful is to be conscious of them, conscious of one's eternal responsibility to be an individual.

Knowledge of history does not reveal its eternal character. That can be revealed only by participation, by an "existential" and not merely a descriptive response to reality. Only out of despair at finite attempts to grasp reality can the possibility of "willing one thing" (the good) arise, can the reward of rebirth come to the individual. Rebirth is, of course its own reward: participation with the eternal in the essentially free acts of creative experience. Such is existential living, a genuine passage from "non-being to being", and a passage the condition for which is provided by the eternal's breaking into history in Jesus Christ.

Conversion is an individual process; it does not take place en masse:





"This notion of the single individual man 'before God' is something that speculation can never get into its head; all it does is to universalize the individual man fantastically in the race."<sup>1</sup>

"What then must I do? Live as an individual..each man, as an individual, should render his account to God...the most ruined evasion of all is to be hidden in a crowd...you are an individual, the man who is himself conscious of being an individual, and thereby conscious of his eternal responsibility ...Do you live in such a way that this consciousness is able to secure time and quiet and liberty of action to penetrate every relation of your life?"<sup>2</sup>

Existential philosophy is concerned with the whole man as a responsible individual, under the demands of the eternal:

"Take love as an illustration. The one who truly loves does not love once and for all. Nor does he use part of his love, and then again another part. For to change it into small coins is not to use it rightly. No, he loves with all of his love. It is wholly present in each expression. He continues to give it away as a whole, and yet he keeps it intact as a whole, in his heart."<sup>3</sup>

It is to the "moment" of wholeness of participation in man's own essential freedom; to that everlasting "Yea" which is a free decision and yet determined, earth-bound and yet supernatural, conditioned and yet unconditioned; to the existential as contrasted with the speculative realm; it is to this that all Kierkegaard's writings are designed to introduce the reader. And it

---

1. LOWRIE p. 400 (quoted)      2. KIERKEGAARD p. 163,168,182.  
3. IBID p.33



must be added, lest his thought be twisted, not just to introduce but to place the reader in the midst of. The individual, life itself, is a paradox and a contradiction and can not be grasped by the spectator.

"The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something thought cannot think."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the dictum, "the real is the rational" is the final blasphemy to Kierkegaard. "Cogito ergo sum" must be reversed, in his estimation; he himself offered only "scraps of philosophy" because he was convinced a system was impossible for any finite mind. "With their much knowledge", he says, "people have entirely forgotten what it means to EXIST and what INWARDNESS<sup>2</sup> means."

Since all existence bears contradiction it resists the effort of reason to comprehend it. All faith, therefor, and all real acts of becoming are "leaps" which express the essential freedom as well as the determinism of personality, and defy every logical category of explanation.

Like Nietzsche he attacked formal religion and theology as a trivial gloss on the real, existential thing. Theology is vain "if it does not transform the

---

1. BIXLER p. 341 (from "Philosophical Fragments.")

2. LOWRIE p. 301 (from the "Fragments.")





thinker's personality and shape his 'existence'<sup>1</sup>.  
Theology must be the confrontation of the individual by the eternal, as decision, in the moment (arising out of despair and sin), and leads to a leap of faith transforming the attitude of the whole man.

He dismissed efforts to "defend" Christianity for the same reason that he repudiated the pretence of the philosophers to disinterestedness. All true existence, he asserted, is personal, passionately, affirmative and decisive. To defend Christianity is tantamount to a confession of religious insolvency, for Christianity is a continuous assault by the eternal upon and in the temporal. It needs no defense: just prosecution.

Kierkegaard tells us to be about our Father's business!

Two final points complete this survey of the vast range of his writings from the standpoint of their effect upon continental theology. Kierkegaard clung tenaciously to both the freedom of the human personality, and the omnipotence of God, to the qualitative difference between God and man and the continuous presence of that same God with the individual:

---

1. IBID p. 302 (Ibid)



"The greatest good which can be done to any human being, greater than any end to which it can be created, is to make it free..Omnipotence alone can take itself back while giving, and this relationship is nothing else but the independence of the recipient. God's omnipotence is therefor his goodness...It is only a miserable and wordly picture of the dialectic of power to say that it becomes greater in proportion as it can compel and make things dependent. Socrates knew better; the art of using power is to make men free."<sup>1</sup>

"There is an endless yawning qualitative difference between God and man..a man can do nothing at all.. this is Grace and here lies Christianity's first.. nevertheless we should dare to approach God with childlike confidence (this is the second).....  
...if the first is the whole thing then God becomes so endlessly exalted that there is no absolutely real relationship at all between God and man..one must pay careful heed to the second without which the life of the individual acquires no elan..in our time it is especially important to recover the child like confidence..."<sup>2</sup>

Barth, whose teachings are discussed in the following section, has emphasized only one side of the existential philosophy. "(Religious) longing is not the unspeakable itself. It is only the hastening after it",<sup>3</sup>said Kierkegaard. Barth read this to mean that God is not only a hidden God but is completely other, undiscoverable by man.

Kierkegaard's message springs directly from the centre of his almost pathological life. Its depth is due to his complete sincerity. Its weakness to his one-

---

1. MOORE p. 574 ("Fragments")

2. LOWRIE p. 9 (from "Diary")

3. KIERKEGAARD p. 20.



sidedness. But his emphasis on the individual, on decision, on the presence of God as an absolute factor demanding our complete committment in each moment--is a message Americans can appreciate. In a day when the individual is almost as underestimated as in Kierkegaard's own time the principle cited at the head of this chapter, along with the assertion that "Remorse, Repentance and Confession" are eternities, "emissaries" to men, will evoke a glad response. Especially if the social situation becomes more obdurate and insoluble.

His paradoxical style, melancholy, introspectiveness and the sane content of his existential philosophy have already won the minds of a majority of Europeans in one way or another. As can be realized from the condition described in the preceding chapter, Kierkegaard's system could and does speak directly to their hearts. European theology has become "Existential Theology".

#### (ii) GERMAN SCHOOLS OF THEOLOGY

The "theology of crisis" of Barth, Brunner is sometimes described as if it was something homogenous. In point of fact it comprises a great variety of emphasis.

Barth, Brunner, Thurneysen, and originally Gogarten, and others, represent the so called "dialectical theology"





or Barthianism; but, as Barth has rather wistfully remarked, even this once close group is drifting rapidly apart.

The schools of Karl Holl and Karl Heim disagree with the Barthian dogma of the complete otherness of God; "emotional thunder" they call it, and assert that the eternal manifests himself in the concrete problems of living, in existential decision and in commitments.

The Conservatives, among the new Lutherans, return to a dynamic interpretation of the pre-theological Luther, and tend towards fundamentalism and quietism in social matters. An example of the latter quality in German orthodoxy is the qualifying statement appended to the MADRAS REPORT in December 1938: "There are distinct orders of sex and family, nation and race...the Church has not to bring into force a social program for a renewed world order."<sup>1</sup>

Tillich's "Kairos" theology follows up another of Kierkegaard's insights, "the Moment, and a new Teacher: God in Time."<sup>2</sup> And the religious realists such as Piper, Koebule and A. D. Mueller criticise Barth for neglecting the bible and Tillich for dehumanizing Christ.

---

1. MADRAS p. 150 - 1.

2. MOORE p. 573 (from the "Fragments" of Kierkegaard).



Many more divisions of thought could be listed. In spite of this diversity they are all united in their point of departure: what right has man to deduce divine reality from the subjective data of his own consciousness? And in the main they all agree that religious life must be existential. It must be, in other words, not an interpretation of the world but man's answer to God's demands in participation; not the Cartesian "Cogito ergo sum", but "'Credo'. What shall I do?"

Further, there is also another general category which divides, rather than unites them: namely the category of conservative and progressive. Both groups start from the despair and danger of the post-war world. The representatives of the conservative, static type advise patience, endurance in faith, conservation, retrenchment, and as little change as possible. (supra.)

The progressives, on the other hand, claim that the very feeling of security which the conservatives desire to preserve is the real danger. Tillich calls this spirit of resistance to change and clinging to the status quo of a capitalist society and the contemporary symbol of self sufficient finitude.<sup>1</sup> Only a revolutionary change of some sort can keep this desire for security from destroying those who believe in it, for it is essentially a domonic not a creative power.

---

1. TILLICH p. 82.





Most of the conservative group were Nationalists; the progressives on the whole were, and continue to be religious socialists. In Germany, the former group was, and of course now is in the majority. Among the exiles perhaps the other is true.

Neo-Calvinism and Neo-Lutheranism have been revivals of reformation theology in Germany. As has been seen it led to reactionary political and doctrinal attitude on the part of the orthodox majority (supra p. ), but it did give them a vital form of faith with which to withstand Nazism when the latter became oppressive. The resistance has been offered, however, in sixteenth century language that carries little appeal for the majority of the German people. The thing that illustrates the innate conservatism of the German church better than anything else is that its Lutheran platform enabled it to assume a hostile position with respect to Nazism only after the church itself was attacked by it; whereas from the beginning, in the Social-Democratic period, it refused to accept the government's policies as sincere.

Piper credits the conservatives with bringing about a dynamic understanding of Luther. Apart from that they serve to illustrate the fate of a church and theology



which withdraws from the world. They also illustrate the impact of totalitarianism on theology. The citation from the Madras report (supra p. 8) is a living witness to the historical truth that theology is shaped out of the materials of environment. In modern Germany social change is impossible save by the government; so change is omitted from the theological statements of orthodoxy and ascribed to the machinations of Satan, rather than to God. The examples, (Barth, Brunner and Tillich) represent the progressive group, and were discussed because in them is to be found the clue to the future theology of Germany. Provided, of course, the present totalitarian reaction proves to be but a passing phase in her history.

(iii) KARL BARTH

Barth, before he eschewed all philosophy, taught an existential philosophy similar to that of Kierkegaard. But unlike him he chose to stress the qualitative difference between man and God, the unbridgeable gap between eternity and time. Communication takes place only by virtue of God's act in Jesus, who is "the way, the only way, by which men come to know God and by which a relationship, and more than this, a communion,



between man and God is established."<sup>1</sup> Christianity is the Word of God: "the Word is eternal, it is itself God."<sup>2</sup> Christian faith is "the reference of all our living, thinking, willing and feeling to the existence of Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

Barth echoes Calvin's "Sola Deo gloria" and Luther's "sola fide". Amidst the chaos of the first Great War the concept "justification by faith" (as in Romans) awakened Barth to new life and power: "only the man who knows about Jesus Christ knows anything about revelation...in Jesus Christ, in him alone, there enters upon the stage of human history that which is really NEW."<sup>4</sup> To those who accuse him of worshipping his own religious experience and tradition he retorts that, unlike the majority of his critics he does not erect some personal thought, feeling or volition as revelation. Like Luther, he finds the divine or, as he would put it the divine find him, in the Word and "the Creed which teaches what God does for us and has given us."<sup>5</sup> Barth's vocabulary is mediaeval but his piercing insights are haunting.

---

1. BARTH 5, p. 55    2. IBID p. 49    3. IBID p. 59  
4. IBID p. 48,45; cf. CALVIN11: p. 104, "Christ is the only pledge of love, for without him all things, both above and below, speak of hatred and wrath."    5. LUTHER p. 104; cf. CALVIN1:249, "As if our doctrine were the figment of our own brain and were not distinctly declared by the Spirit!"





The story of Karl Barth will serve equally well for that of Brunner and the other progressive theologians. His theology arose from a practical need, the sermon. A religious socialist, he lived in a Swiss village during the war, within sound of the guns. What to preach, how to prove God from the history, ethics and psychology he had imbibed? The question was unanswerable, but before giving up he resolved to make a last effort by a new study of certain books of the bible, this, he and several other friends carried out, Barth doing Romans.

In 1918 his commentary on Romans was published, a fiery, scornful arraignment of both church and society. "God is in his heaven", quoted Barth, "and man is on earth...there is in the world no observable righteousness..."<sup>1</sup> From that time Barth's concern has been to expound the wholly sovereign otherness of the hidden God. He regards the first commandment and the creedal statement, "God, the creator", as sufficient summary of Christian truth. And this insistence has been his abiding contribution to Christian theology.

God's Word, says Barth, can be grasped only by faith for God speaks across the gulf dividing him from

---

1. DE MOORE p. 131 (from "Epistle to the Romans", p.10,75)



man not by means of and in terms of the language of our own spirits, but against and to our spirits. The subject of God's speech is "God, and God alone."<sup>1.</sup>

How does God speak? By means of his Word of which the bible is a token. In it we are known by God, although God remains veiled even in Jesus since man could not stand a direct revelation of his sovereignty.

The Word in Jesus is not an historical event to be described or worshipped; it is the spirit of the living God confronting men and demanding their reply, "Yes or no!" Revelation or faith or CREDO is thus decision, the decision of the absolute crisis in which every one eternally stands. Christian theology is the CREDO speaking, and needs nothing except the Word as its basis, neither philosophy, or science or culture of any kind.

God is not an object for our knowledge (to "know" God is to decide for him); "God never and nowhere becomes the world. The world never and nowhere becomes God."<sup>2</sup> Creator and creature have their beings in "totally unequal co-existence". God is both completely transcendent and also continuously immanent and co-existent with the world. His immanence consists in "His free omnipotent presence and lordship in the world that he

---

1. IBID p. 140 (from "Dogmatik" p. 95) 2. BARTH p. 34.





created." <sup>1</sup> Barth's immanence is co-existence with rather than expression through the world, as the term usually connotes.

Man does not become really man until addressed by God. Then, as the recipient of revelation his existential self is awakened, the gods he has worshipped until that moment drop away and the one true God takes their place. Struggle on man's part cannot bring him knowledge of God, but only of idols. It is only when God speaks that man can answer. In revelation alone, in the Word alone, can there be decision, CREDO!

<sup>2</sup> "Man is a riddle and nothing else." The "Imago Dei" was completely lost at the time of the fall, and faith comes from God. For man cannot, by searching find out God: the Christian good news must come from outside the circle of his own endeavors.

The criticism levelled at this doctrine is that it is not dialectic at all, but purely paradoxical.<sup>3</sup> How can man possess anything outside the circle of his own activities? Dialectics approaches its object through a method of continual tension which assumes a connection between subject and object. To be able to ask about God man must in some manner have already known about him.

---

1. IBID p. 34

2. BARTH 2, p. 197

3. TILLICH 7



This is the point over which Barth and Brunner parted company: is there a general revelation, does God participate in not just co-exist with, human historical events? The question this raises will be left to the following section when Brunner's position is discussed.

It is necessary here to point out the confusion into which the question has been cast by Barth's latest<sup>#</sup> pronouncement, that National Socialism is a religious, and not only a political issue. Previously Barth has always rejected the possibility of seeing theological issues in historical events. In fact he left the religious socialist group soon after "Romans" was published on that account, although remaining a social democrat throughout.

In his Gifford Lectures Barth evidently condemns withdrawal from the world, and claims the political order as a positive "order for the service of God". Vlastos sums up the criterion Barth lays down for action:

"Service consists in what the state does. Does it enforce justice and preserve liberty? If so, it is our duty to support it--not merely our political duty, but our Christian duty as well. Does it corrupt justice and destroy liberty? Then it is our Christian duty to resist it with every means at our command... (to resist a government of liars, murderers, incendiaries, a government which wishes to usurp the place of God, to fetter the conscience,



to suppress the church and become itself the church of Antichrist."<sup>1</sup>

In several of his writings Barth takes great pains to state that his present vigorous opposition to Nazism (since the seizure of Czechoslovakia) is occasioned because it has set itself up as God, and not because<sup>2</sup> it is a particular form of political organisation.

Despite his protests it cannot be again said that his theological interpretation of the present German situation flings wide the door for a religious interpretation of all political systems and all historical situations. The religious socialists like Tillich and Vlastos have not been slow in pointing<sup>3</sup> this out.

Barth replies to their arguments that he has shifted his position by claiming that it was not he who changed, but Hitler, not his theology but the application of it. Needless to say it is probable that his shift is a real one, whether he recognizes it or not: to deny it is to separate theory and practise in a thoroughly "un-existential" way. In the appendix to "Credo" Barth, in a very interesting statement, remarks on the determining effect of environment upon belief:

---

1. VLASTOS p. 1066      2. See BARTH 3, BARTH 4.  
3. TILlich 8; VLASTOS.





"What separates us relatively is the fact that I have spent the last fourteen years of my life in GERMANY. You are living as Dutchmen in HOLLAND. ...All your questions betray to some extent that you are still able to pursue theology in COMFORT, with a certain calmness and detachment...It has been a great pleasure to me to see that it is still possible to have this kind of theology in the world of to-day, for I am convinced that there is need for theology of this type also... When you look back over my lectures or listen now to my answers to your questions you must reflect that such is the situation from which I am speaking....it is impossible for us to see ENTIRELY eye to eye.."<sup>1</sup>

Doubtless "the situation" in Germany is responsible for Barth's new attitude. In a completely totalitarian state the only Christian belief that could function adequately would be a belief, evolved out of another totalitarian environment, "Obey God rather than man, the Emperor or Fuhrer." It is an easy step from this to advocating not merely disobedience, but actual attack on the secular idol.

The evolution of Barth's thinking is a parable for the ecumenical movement. It is the story of beliefs hammered out in an era when time was a synonym for despair, when time and despair were of value only as fingers pointing to a reality beyond themselves. God was transferred, as a result, to a realm outside of time where at no point would he have to endure its degrading touch.

---

1. BARTH p. 173,4,5.



With the coming of Hitler another view of time emerged: for it was revealed as not merely finite and evil but as the vehicle of a militant enemy of the good, and an enemy which neither man alone, nor the "wholly other" God could successfully cope with. Hence today in Barth's Theology God has been called back into time, and into history, to support actively the fight against the demonic forces that have arisen within them.

This interpretation is overly simple, but some such theory does meet the historical facts. German Christianity and theology represents the struggle of one group of men for the grace of God or for the good or for new life. Before the first Great War they identified it with the historical process, with a psychological state, with a philosophic a priori, or with certain cultural-religious achievements. After the War, time, culture and history were discounted as failures and salvation was relegated to another realm.

Barth's theology can be summed up in one question and its answer. The question: "Where may we find God amidst this irrational, seething chaos?" And the answer: "God is not to be found on this earthly plane, but only in a revelation and redemption from above."





(iv) EMIL BRUNNER

The two chief names associated with the theology of crisis have been those of Brunner and Barth. They agreed in their general outlooks until Brunner began to investigate the problem of the point of contact between God's revelation and human reason. His investigation culminated in a conviction that the most important problem for theology was to find a satisfactory substitute for natural religion. Brunner found this substitute in the concept of the individual as always, whether in sin or redeemed, dependent upon God, in an existential not a Schliermarchian manner; and thus, through his sense of responsibility always receiving hints of his divine calling:

"Our heart cannot escape from God: it knows about God! But our heart does not know him truly. Our conscience tells us THAT God is, but does not know WHO He is. Our reason testifies of God and yet does not know who He is. The world with a million fingers pointed toward God, but it cannot reveal Him to us...WHO God is--God Himself must tell us in His Revelation."<sup>1</sup>

And this special revelation, as distinct and discontinuous from general revelation, occurs only in Christ: there God takes the initiative and gives himself. Only there we learn of God as love. Specifically, the points

---

1. BRUNNER p. 5-6.



at which Brunner differs with Barth are, (1) The Doctrine of the fall, (2) The question of general revelation and (3) The problem of Christian ethics. In other things their teaching is practically the same.

With respect to the "Imago Die", Barth says it was completely shattered in the "fall" - an incomprehensible concept which both use ambiguously to mean a hereditary stain at one time, and cosmological and social finiteness at another. Brunner posits a special category "the humanus", the true being of man as man, which he says is always, from God's standpoint, maintained as a unity. Sin perverts and corrupts man's being but does not reduce him to the animal level, without consciousness of God. The "humanus" even though perverted is the basis of man's life, preserves him as MAN in his relation to God, and serves the gospel as its point of contact in redemption in grace. Brunner agrees with Barth that the "Imago" is renewed only by the free act of God's redeeming word. The difference is over the fall, and the method of redemption.

A few quotations will illustrate all three points of difference:

"It is not the member of a species, not the ZOON, and not man as the more or less indifferent transitional point in the history of civilization and of Spirit, the spirit-being, which knows the 'Thou', but solely the human being who, in the



'Thou' of the 'Other', comes to realize that his being a Self means his being a person, which is not subordinated to any higher "something", but is itself the ultimate meaning.....

.....man can only be understood as existing in the Word of Creation, as that being which not only has his existence--like all other creatures--but has a special nature, that is human nature.....

.....man is the being who is responsible.. that is he is not only borne by this Word of God..but is in some way or other aware of it..

.....The meaning of all responsibility is love..man can only be understood as issuing from love and made for love. Love is both the source and meaning of his life..but only in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the meaning of the word 'love' rightly defined for us by the Divine action.....

.....Being-for-love is not one attribute of human existence, but it is human existence itself. Man is man to the exact extent in which he lives in love. The degree of his alienation from love is the degree of his inhumanity. The distinctively human element is not freedom, nor intellectual creative power, nor reason. They do not contain their own meaning, but their meaning is love, true community. It is not the degree of genius which determines the degree of humanity, of human existence, but the degree of love. But all this is true only in so far as we understand love in the New Testament sense as the fulfilling of responsibility, the one explaining the other, and maintaining its right meaning."<sup>1</sup>

(1) The "Imago Dei", shattered completely in Barth's theology, retains its primary human quality in Brunner, requiring the Word to restore its original "man-Godhood" and make each individual like Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. BRUNNER 3, p. 23, 73, 74. 2. BRUNNER p. 70





(2) Brunner believes God is still revealing himself in His Creation at the present time, but that scripture must serve as a guide to man in finding God in Creation; "we must distinguish between the general (nature) and the special (historical) revelation, and finally between that which the believer and the unbeliever knows of the revelation in Nature."<sup>1</sup>

(3) Finally, Brunner as over against Barth, can and does speak of a Christian ethic. Since the meaning of love is responsibility and responsibility is love, Christian ethics develop in each particular moment as those acts demanded of the believer in fulfillment of love. Thus Brunner publishes a book on ethics, "The Command and the Ordinances", or "An Outline of Protestant Ethics". He repudiates any authoritative legalism:

"I must at all times decide..what the one command to love my neighbour, demands of me in the service of the order and in the immediately-personal brotherly service. And: not I have to decide, but I must receive the concrete command of God in this situation of decision.....what the better order is is not known through faith, but through reason."<sup>2</sup>

Some particular ethical observations:

"The only kind of ethical problem there is...is the social ethical problem..it is foolish imagination if Christians believe that only in the realm of Christian faith is good will and ethical seriousness possible...an ethics which withdraws from economic problems, has, in all events, no claim upon the name of Christian or

---

1. BRUNNER 3, p. 527, 530.



or Biblical...(the capitalistic system) is a radical denial of what we perceive from the standpoint of faith to be the meaning of faith to be the meaning of economic endeavor, and makes it almost impossible for the individual to realize service to God and his neighbour in his own economic activity..."<sup>3</sup>

The conclusion:

"The spirit of God which speaks to us in His Word, is not only a speaker, but also active spirit. Even though we cannot of ourselves build the Kingdom of God, God can do it through our activity..."<sup>4</sup>

The last few quotations suggest the "Kairos" theology of Paul Tillich, and provide a natural transition point to a discussion of it. Barth and Brunner, both in their agreements and in their differences, have issued a resounding bugle call for a return to the transcendent aspect of God's nature. Unfortunately the note they play are sixteenth century notes, and the arrangement as a result more frequently irritates the listener than instructs or convinces. Brunner is the more modern of the two in his concepts and even he devotes many pages to abstruse speculation about theological problems which have only the slightest connection with the realities of our twentieth century world. Barth and Brunner are read today for the corrections and incisive insights they display. For guidance,

---

2, 3, 4, All quoted, from four books of Brunner's, by REST p. 183-192.





inspiration, and a coherent system of thought Paul Tillich, of all the continentals, is the more attractive.

(v) PAUL TILlich

The writings of Tillich are so compressed it is difficult to make an adequate summary of any kind. What follows is a selection of his main teachings, especially those which offer a connecting link between European and American theologies.

Tillich, in many respects, is exactly what the dialectical theologians are not: he is a man of his time. Keenly aware of the social crisis of the present time, of the religious issues involved in it, he seeks to arouse Christians to the task of discovering a new symbol for the expression of Christian meaning in the new age. The theological terms he uses are acceptable to a scientific culture. One of the most striking examples of this is his contention that God must not be regarded as a static essence. Time exists for the very essence of being and history is an expression of divine activity which is time-ful. God must not be thought of as a transcendent essence:



"The transcendent cannot be expressed in terms of being but only in terms of meaning. We understand what is meant by 'unconditioned meaning'-- for instance, unconditioned good or truth--but we do not understand what is meant by 'unconditioned being' because all our thinking is limited to the realm of conditioned beings and its categories."1

He places the religious interpretation of history, and the attempt to discover the significance and direction of the church's historical existence at the centre of theological problems today. Christian thinking after Tillich is historical, uses a bi-polar method: one pole is the source of history, the ultimate meaning of existence, seen in Jesus; the other, is the present Kairos or moment of fulfillment of and demand by that meaning.

Tillich's analysis of our own time is that our contemporary capitalist world is plagued by three demonic forces that resist the attempts of the ultimate meaning of existence to overcome them and actualize the divine in human history. These forces, of which the first is the worst, are capitalism, nationalism and bolshevism. Capitalism dehumanizes man and subjects him to economic forces; nationalism, arising from capitalism, reintegrates man on a less than universal basis; bolshevism

---

1. TILlich 3, p. 113.



is a drive to secure the social justice which capitalism denies, seeks it in ways that rob the individual of freedom and dignity. The "Kairos" of the present situation is some form of socialist society which has eliminated political sovereignties and provides itself with anti-dictatorial corrections in the structure of government.

The unique feature of Tillich's position is not the particular conclusions; they have been preached from many sources for some years now. The unique feature is that these forms of political and economic order are interpreted by Tillich as the embodiment in time of a realization of the eternal attempt by the unconditioned source of existence to overcome the resistance offered to it by human finitude. It is a religious interpretation of the whole of history.

To the individual Christian, Tillich's view means the end of "spectatorism". Those who lay claim to live in the light of God can do so only by daring faith and action in the will of God for our own historical situation. "Man's creative freedom is the participation of man in the primary creativity on which both he and his world depend."<sup>1</sup> To the churches it means,

---

1. TILLICH 6, p. 209.





"They are summoned to reflect upon the great solutions of their past and to seek for a new solution, expressed in some powerful symbol, which will meet the need of humanity of the present day in its questioning, and in its despair."<sup>1</sup>

The concept by which he solves the perennial quarrel between natural and revealed theology is particularly suggestive:

"In every historical experience of God there is implied an element of revelation; or history must receive revelation in EVERY moment in order to be able to receive it in one moment. For every moment in history is dependent upon every other one, the present on the past and the future on the present; and conversely... This interdependence in history entails that the one moment which we call revelation can be revelation for us only because there is preceding revelation in every moment."<sup>2</sup>

A "Historical Theology", is Tillich's solution to the long battle between natural and revealed religion. Man, he says, is not a natural animal, nor a supernatural animal, nor both.<sup>3</sup> Rather, his existence is "an existential question to which revelation is the existential answer." Man, so to speak is an historical animal. Revelation, for the individual, is that which grips him and provides the criterion by which the rest of his experience is criticized and transformed. It is a moment of participation in the unconditioned meaning of existence, and is grasped by faith, apprehended rather than comprehended, as Von Hugel was fond of saying.

---

1. TILLICH 3, p. 105    2. TILLICH 4, p. 167.    3. IBID p.170.



Should Paul's insight, says Tillich, become revelation to any one, the whole of Judaism is for that person made new. If sin is used in someone's explanation of revelation the whole of man's tragic suffering and religious experience, the meaning of fate and destiny, are consciously or unconsciously included and transformed by the new thought just apprehended.

Faith for Tillich has been designated as "BELIEF-FUL REALISM. It is the unconditioned acceptance of the serious importance of our concrete situation in time and of the situation of time in general in the presence of eternity; such an attitude contains the negation of every kind of romanticism and utopianism but it includes the hope of an economic and social life in which the spirit of capitalism--the symbol of self-sufficient finitude--<sup>1</sup> has been overcome."

The concept of Kairos, "the moment of time which<sup>2</sup> is invaded by eternity", expresses this realistic faith in contrast to utopianism or pessimism. Belief-ful realism by intuition seeks the unconditioned in those conditioned symbols that are unique in expressing meaning beyond themselves. "True knowledge is not

---

1. TILlich p. 82    2. TILlich p. 139.





absolute knowledge; but is knowledge born of the kairos, that is, of the fate of the time, of the point at which time is disturbed by eternity.<sup>1</sup> A moment of time or an event deserves the name of kairos if it so "speaks of the Unconditioned" that "to speak of it is at the same time to speak of the Unconditioned."<sup>2</sup>

No society, no symbol is itself the eternal. But all of them point to the meaning beyond themselves, to the Unconditioned upon which they depend. Some of them are more meaningful than others; some express different aspects of meaningfulness.

Existence, human or societal, is not able to stay content with itself but seeks always to express the Unconditioned lying above and beyond all existential forms. The closed, self-sufficient finite forms of evolutionary capitalistic society are breaking down today, barriers to the creative demands of the Unconditioned are being removed, and men seek new forms of fulfillment.

Faith in the unconditioned meaning of all existence is required, else life degenerates into meaninglessness.<sup>3</sup> "If any present has meaning it has eternity. The present times lost that faith because it was nourished on self-sufficient finite forms of existence: so long

---

1. TILLICH 2 p. 174    2. IBID p. 173    3. TILLICH p. 7



as it clings to these it is doomed to meaninglessness. Barthianism is an attempt to wrench the scales from our eyes and to restore the sense of the Unconditioned. But Barthianism forgets to think by the bi-polar method necessary to all Christians. It loses itself in unrealistic attitudes towards the present because it has both eyes focused only on the Unconditioned expressed in Jesus. Faith must be mated with a realistic, existential acceptance of the existence of other things here and now.

Finally, Tillich has given us a religious interpretation of all historical life. All movements in history are, Tillich holds, movements toward Christian goals; this is to say that they are all under the same expectation and demand, the same kairos, or movement of eternity, as the Christian. A Christian is one who consciously participates in the kairos, the fullness of time of his epoch. In so doing he, by his own decision, binds the past and the present together, thereby expressing both his fate and his freedom, his existential and his essential self.

Tillich escapes the unattractive dualism of most modern European theologies by his concept of historical, existential, belief-ful realism, and by his portrayal of history as the struggle between the demonic and the



divine. The transcendental otherness of God is banished from his system in favor of the Unconditioned, present in and to every finite form, and beyond them, as their ground and meaning. He begins, says one of his translators, with the ethical question, "What ought I to do?" For he believes that unless one is willing to answer that question, unless one is eager to engage existentially in living, there is little use in embarking on the theological expedition. Man's task is to place himself every moment at God's disposal; morality has to be an actual living obedience. Man lives both body and soul, in this world, and the Christian man wants to know about God's dealings with him here and now.

Europe's tragedy is Tillich's tragedy; he has been exiled from his own country because they could not bear to hear what he had to say. Now he has become a leader of American theology. Tillich's existential philosophy and kairos theology are admirably suited to act as one of the much needed theological bridges to span the gulf dividing Christians of the two continents.

Certainly the American trend towards realistic theology is echoed in Tillich's belief-ful realism; his metaphysics of history in Morrison's, "Christianity as history"; his search for a new symbol for Christianity





is echoed in W. A. Brown's efforts towards a post-Protestant ecumenical church; his concept of kairos and analysis of the present situation, in the "Social Gospel", his description of the individual as the creative participant in the fulfillment of Unconditioned meaning is echoed in Jones's "mutual and reciprocal correspondence"; his complete acceptance of contemporary culture as "forms of grace" and expressions of the Unconditioned by which we are inspired, in America's leaning towards belief in the democracy of all forms of life under God; and finally, his freedom from tradition is echoed in the untraditionalism associated with theology in the United States.

At the same time his roots in the existential philosophy of Kierkegaard and others, and his insistence that every form of reality is only a symbol of God, and never God himself, unites him with his fellow Europeans and with the reformation tradition.

Professor Tillich not only stands on the boundary between theology and philosophy, church and society, Lutheranism and socialism, idealism and Marxism, home and alien land, to mention but a few of the striking pairs of opposites he finds at creative tension within himself. He also stands on the boundary between European and American theology.



BIBLIOGRAPHY CHAPTER XI

Reference

- Title: (the books of Calvin, Luther, Barth, Brunner, Keller, Kierkegaard are translations)
- BARTH K. "Credo", New York, Scribners, 1936. \*
- BARTH 2, K. "The Word of God and the Word of Man", The Pilgrim Press, 1928.
- BARTH 3, K., "The Church & The Political Problem of our Day", London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1939. \*
- BARTH 4, K., "How my Mind Has Changed in this Decade", two articles in THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, Sept. 13, 20th, 1939. \*
- BARTH 5, K., "Revelation", a symposium, London, Faber & Faber Ltd., 1937. \*
- BERDYAEV, N. A., "The Crisis of Christianity", CHRISTENDOM, Spring 1937.
- BIXLER, J. S., Review of Kierkegaard's "Philosophical Fragments", JOURNAL OF RELIGION, July 1937.
- BRUNNER, E., "Our Faith", New York, Scribners, 1936. \*
- BRUNNER 2, E., "The Philosophy of Religion from the standpoint of Protestant Theology", London, Ivoer Nicholson and Watson, 1937. \*
- BRUNNER 3, E., "Man in Revolt, A Christian Anthropology", New York, Scribners, 1939. \*
- CALVIN, J., "Institutes of the Christian Religion", in 3 Vols., Edinburgh, Edinburgh Printing Company, 1845.
- CAVE, S., "Foreign Reviews", CONGREGATIONAL QUARTERLY, July 1937.
- CAVE 2, S., "Foreign Impressions", CONGREGATIONAL QUARTERLY, October, 1933.
- CHANING-PEARCE, M., "Karl Barth as a Post War Prophet", HIBBERT JOURNAL, April 1937.





- DE MOOR, L., "The Concept of Revelation in Barthianism", JOURNAL OF RELIGION, April, 1937.
- HARVEY, G. L. H., "Karl Barth's Theology", THE MODERN CHURCHMAN, May, 1928.
- KELLER, A., "Karl Barth and Christian Unity", London, Lutterworth Press, 1932.
- KELLER 2, A., "Religion and the European Mind", London, Lutterworth Press, 1934. \*
- Keller 3, A., "Political Theology in Europe", CHRISTENDOM, 1939.
- KIERKEGAARD, S., "Purity of Heart is to Will one thing", Harpers, New York, 1939. \*
- LOWRIE, W., "Kierkegaard", London, Oxford University Press, 1938. \*
- LUTHER, M., "Luther's Primary Works", collected by Wace and Bucheim, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1896.
- MADRAS, "The World Mission of the Church", the findings and recommendations of the International Missionary Council meeting at Tambaram, Madras, India, London, Int. Miss. Council, 1939.
- McGIFFERT, A. C., "Barthianism in English", a review, CHRISTENDOM, Autumn 1935.
- MOORE, W. G., "Kierkegaard and his Century", THE REVIEW OF THE CHURCHES, October 1929.
- PIPER, O., "Recent Developments in German Protestantism", London, S. C. M., 1934 \*
- REST, K. H. A., "The Theology of Crisis and the Crisis of Capitalism", THE JOURNAL OF RELIGION, April, 1934. \*
- RITCHIE, D. L., "Barth and Barthianism", CANADIAN JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT, September 1929.



- RICHARDS, G. W., "Zwingli's Pathway to Certainty", CANADIAN JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT, March, 1932.
- VLASTOS, G., "Barth Rethinks Barthianism", THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, Sept. 6, 1939. \*
- WIEMAN, H. N., "The Interpretation of Kierkegaard", CHRISTIAN CENTURY, July, 1938.
- TILLICH, P., "The Religious Situation", New York, Scribners, 1936. \*
- TILLICH 2, P., "The Interpretation of History", New York, Scribners, 1936. \*
- TILLICH 3, P., "The Kingdom of God and History", a symposium, London, G. Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1938. \*
- TILLICH 4, P., "Natural and Revealed Religion", CHRISTENDOM, Autumn, 1935. \*
- TILLICH 5, P., "Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Christian Faith", Union Theological Seminary forum, Feb. 28, 1938.
- TILLICH 6, P., "The Conception of Man in Existential Philosophy", THE JOURNAL OF RELIGION, July 1939. \*
- TILLICH 7, P., "What is Wrong with the Dialectic Theology", THE JOURNAL OF RELIGION, April 1935.
- TILLICH 8, P., "Karl Barth's Turning Point", a review, CHRISTENDOM, Winter, 1940.



## CHAPTER XII

### UT OMNES UNUM SINT

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." (John 13:35)

#### (I) EUROPE AND AMERICA

During the course of the essay certain points of contact between European and American theologies have been tentatively suggested. The problem of ecumenism has been revealed as the problem of the communication of meanings between representatives of different ways of living. Just as individuals are, in a sense, static deposits from an ongoing process of reality, so with sets of beliefs. If we conceive of Christianity as "the march<sup>1</sup> of history" into the lives of men, the Christianities of European and American extraction are the responses to it of two different history-making groups of individuals.

It has been demonstrated, in experimental psychology, that in perception, the idea which an individual has of the object he is about to look at, materially affects the form of the object as he sees it. In like manner the traditions, customs and ideas of American and European Christians have materially affected the objective revelation conveyed to them through history. The God

---

1 Christianity is not to be confused with God, but is God's revelation.





and the Christianity each knows is not only represented by a different symbol, but the object symbolized is also different. As the first seven chapters pointed out this is because the traditions and ideas actually became part of the revelation to the participants.

It is thus clear that it is not an artificial gulf which separates British and American theology. It grows out of the very fibre of life and the very materials of revelation. The religious, cultural, economic and political factors of their two environments have interacted to produce different symbols of meaning, and different attitudes to living. Far from being unimportant these items of difference frequently are the very points at which a dynamic vision has broken into their respective lives. In Europe the reformation doctrines have been as a dyke, sent from heaven, against the pressure of totalitarianism. In America, by contrast, Jesus' practical maxim, "By their fruits ye shall know them", has been a guide out of the confusion of prodigality in a new land where belief in dogma had practically no permanent dynamic function at all.

It is interesting that the "Existential" theology, the challenge to existential as compared with theoretical



answers to the question, "What shall I do?", has been developed in Germany, the pietistic country whose major accomplishment was brilliance of mind. While the rational, scientific theology comes from activist America where up until recent times there was scarce time to think before acting. On the one hand, Germany, famed for her powers of thought, has been forced to realize that thinking is not enough: and on the other, America, the exemplar of purposeful activity, has had to recognize that activity in itself may be meaningless. One prophecy that may be made is that neither theology will forfeit its new insights until a greater is revealed to them as history. In fact the prophecy is really another principle of ecumenism, and one which counsels patience with the uncooperative.

In totalitarian Germany, theology became totalitarian: under democratic conditions in America even the concept of God was democratized. Little common ground between the two appears at first glance. But the discussion has shown that the totalitarian and the democratic theology do meet on the plane of totalitarian religion. The European concept of an "existential" decision is akin to the idea of commitment to God's will in every given situation, urged by the American protagonists of the





social gospel. The symbolic expression of this state of affairs which seems to be meaningful to both parties, is the idea of Christianity as history. Paul Tillich, in particular, provides a channel of common understanding at this point. And some Europeans and some Americans understand the idea of God's revelation as present in and confronting each individual through the materials of his environment. They differ profoundly, of course, as to which are the materials which mediate the revelation and as to how the connection is made between God and man.

Other suggested channels of communication have been tossed out as the discussion proceeded. However, the purpose of this essay was not to examine the theory and future of ecumenism. The purpose of the essay, as stated at the start, was to explore the background of differences which existed between two particular groups of the churches concerned in the ecumenical movement.

How sincerely minded Christians can differ basically from one another, must be obvious by now. The orthodox German pietist quite sincerely finds the pragmatic American social visionary something of an enigma, and surely, to him, no Christian! Needless to say the American returns the compliment.



And when one considers the other varieties of Christianity--the African, Oriental, Indian, English--the question raises itself, is there really any immediate hope for the ecumenical movement, for a reapproachment, even between European and American theology? The answer is I think, that there is both hope and opportunity. The conditions are ripening for it, and the vision is being given that will provide its dynamic.

The concluding sections do not discuss the framework set up at Utrecht in 1938 to provide an instrument through which a World Council of Churches might witness to and seek the reality of the UNA SANCTA. They consist of suggestions as to (1) the hope, and (2) the opportunity of the ecumenical movement. By the hope is meant the forces and conditions which indicate that the time for an ecumenical church is actually at hand; by the opportunity, the kind of new vision that presents itself to the modern Christian as the pathway that will lead him to new consciousness of God, of man and hence of a new church.

(ii) THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT: ITS HOPE

(a) HOW CAN I FIND A GRACIOUS GOD?"

The first hope of ecumenism lies in the ever growing recognition by Christians that members of other communions are asking the above question in all honesty, and have



actually received an answer to it. God has found them. Theological classifications, and denominations are seen as parts of a greater process, the discovery--revelation of new life. Christianity has come, in their minds, both to have dealings with the ultimate and to be involved in change.

The life struggle of Peter and Paul, Marcion and Irenaeus, Luther and Wyclif, Barth and Niebuhr, Tillich and Morrison are more and more regarded by all branches of Christendom as witnesses to the reality of a supra-historical purpose which works its way out as diverse forms of expression in all the various churches.

(b) A NEW CHURCH

The second hope for the ecumenical movement is that the quest for eternal life is being pursued again in a setting more nearly like that of a world order than at any time since the collapse of the mediaval civilization in Europe. Not only that but groups of humanity, hitherto considered to be outside the pale of civilization, are making their contribution to a new world culture. India, Africa China and South America will be integral parts of the world of tomorrow. Cultures, both Christian and non-Christian find common ground in recognition of a transcendent God as the source of life for all mankind.





Even the present military struggle is evidence of an approaching universal civilization; the methods and dangers of modern war have been the same in Europe, Africa, South America and Asia. To that extent each continent faces identical problems, and to that degree understanding is increased.

Improved means of communication of all kinds are drawing the world closer together. The railway united continents; the aeroplane and radio will unite the world. The time lag between translations of vital foreign theological literature has been reduced tremendously in the last one hundred and fifty years. It took nearly a hundred years for Schliermacher, thirty for Ratsehl and less than a decade for Barth to reach English readers. The industrial revolution presents identical religious problems to a Niebuhr in Pennsylvania and a Barth in Geneva. The rise of the "Isms" has given Christians a commonideological danger to face. And, in addition, the past fifty or more years of intensive bible study may be prelude to new religious movements, as it was in reformation times.

In a world where the formal conditions of unity are growing so rapidly, the problems of the world are the problems of the church: namely, the problems of division



and misunderstanding. The presentation of a solution, of a unifying order of life is the function of the church. But it cannot be done by preaching alone, it has to be expressed in a living community. The question becomes, "What is the vision of new community by which Christians are confronted today?"

Briefly, it is a community which exists not for the power and the glory of the individual alone as has been the case since the Renaissance and Reformation with most groups; nor for the exaltation of the group alone as in the Middle Ages and the present totalitarian states; but it is a community of the individual in the group. A group from which the individual emerges more conscious of himself as an individual, and the group more integrated and dynamic than before. Only in this type of new unit of creative experience will mankind "be found" by the power necessary to energize the apathetic community life of both church and state in Western civilization.

Today the swing back from the individualism of the Renaissance and the 17th century, is at its height. The movement towards totalitarianism of national groups, foreseen by Kierkegaard, a century ago, has reached its zenith. The pendulum may swing back again, to a new anarchy, unless some new unit of individual and the group is made so vivid a reality in human history that it becomes a





revelation to men of how to live.

Can Christians heal the wounds and break down the barriers which have arisen out of man's assertion of his individuality in the Renaissance and Reformation? Or will they, along with the rest of the world, slip forward into some new scientific totalitarianism in which the individual becomes an automaton, or into an anarchy in which dreams of a world order are lost forever?

This is the opportunity of the ecumenical movement. For, if Christians would respond completely to the march of history into their lives, their understanding would be deep enough to open the gaps between them. "The sundered fragments of the one body would be gathered together into the whole kingdom which is eternally at hand." Men might again exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another!"

### (iii) THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT: ITS OPPORTUNITY

Such is the vision of the ecumenical movement. How is it to be realized? The times are ripe, the vision is at hand, but neither factor will of itself bring it about. How do men set out to love one another? Not by attempting to stir the wells of sentiment within them, but by such a penetration of human life that they know and understand and are concerned about, not each other's feelings, or brain cells or actions, but about one another.



Men are not only the creatures of circumstance; they are conscious living organisms with the capacity to transcend and even to create circumstance. To love one another means that individuals make the conscious effort to come together in spite and because of their differences.

What do the creeds tell us about love? Did the creed makers know one another or were they so preoccupied with building (a) a church, in the Roman period; (b) an ordered community under the papacy; and (c) a relatively just society for the bourgeois individual under Protestantism, that they never realized what it meant to be responsible individuals with respect to others?

The reformers taught that in the knowledge that Christ had conquered hell for all mankind lay salvation. From faith in that flowed forth love. (Ch. X p.4) Thus they reversed the order of the Pauline paen in 1st Corinthians-- "Faith, hope and love...but the greatest of these is love."

Men are not saved by faith alone. That only gives them knowledge about salvation, and to know that God in Christ is sufficient for all our needs, is not enough.

"Only he that loves knows God and is born of God." It is faith that makes men love, or is it love working in them? Men resist its force, but until they allow it to



flow through them, until Christians learn to trust themselves, their pearls, before each other they are missing the God who seeks in the present situation.

It is only when the spark of divinity is ignited by the mutual interpenetration of human lives that the scales fall from man's eyes and he is able to look upwards with understanding in his heart. And with a vision of the new society in his life.

Christianity, like a flower, is an opening of man's life to God and to men at one and the same instant. One cannot open up in either direction without doing so in both at once. Stagnation in one is stagnation in the other. A flowering in one direction is a flowering in both. And to be conscious of only one is to lack consciousness of both.

Few Christians are concerned to actually know one another; they seldom try to understand. It is not enough to approach each other intellectually or in a common worship experience or in social action. Only the fullest "existential" commitment to each other, which is also a commitment to God, can bridge the gulf dividing them. And it is in such a commitment of mutual trust that the new ecumenical groups must be





launched. There the roots of true individuality can be nourished, and the vision of a new heaven and earth mediated as history to men.

Take an illustration. Here are the experiences of two different people. The first is an extract from a letter of a Quaker friend of the writer's explaining to the Friends why at twenty-five she wants to join their fellowship. The second fragment of experience is from the talk of a German whose basic beliefs were spoken from the tragic setting of Nazi Germany:

"I came across the "Statement of Faith" and was tremendously impressed. No institution, no theological school of tradition, no Apostle's Creed, said to me: You must think thus and so, for this is the Christian faith. Realistically it acknowledged the inherent right and necessity of the individual to come to experience God for himself, to make his own discoveries about Jesus. I had already learned that an inherited religion, accepted ready-made by one's family and one's Church, was useless as a guide to action, or as a dynamic for action. But I had been made to suffer for the right to forge my own faith and my own beliefs. Here at last was a group who not only tolerated such independence but insisted upon it. Again, individual responsibility, without individualism; for a Friend...is responsible to the group as well as to God for his action."

"We ourselves are people in concentration camps, unable to escape from our own helplessness and despair. When, last summer, I had to march as a prisoner behind my fellow-prisoners in the court of the jail, a thought struck me like lightning: there is only one fellowship of destiny among men, the fellowship of insurmountable boundaries, the fellowship of broken freedom, burdened conscience, inability to help.



It is the fellowship of sin and death. Until the One enters our midst, who can pass through the closed gate of prison, because he has the keys to life and death, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and tomorrow and for ever more."

These two are of the finest type of Christians, yet they are far apart in their beliefs. Imagine them to be ten instead of two: how are these Europeans and Americans to understand, know and love one another in a manner sufficiently real to provide a basis for a vital ecumenism, and a channel for the revelation of God's good news to mankind?

Just because their experiences have been so different they are able to know the polarity and tension out of which creative Christianity is born. But it will not be done if the basis upon which they come together is either an ultra-scientific statement of Christian belief, or the esoteric pronouncements of the reformers. It can only be done in the spirit of the original Christian group, the spirit which they lost almost before they had it, the spirit of unity in diversity, the spirit of brotherhood.

They will succeed to the degree that they recognize their common basis to be just that discovery which each had made in his own way and on his or her own level, the discovery of religious living which is at the same time





a revelation. The ecumenical group to be more than a trivial form of words, must consist of groups of men and women of diverse beliefs who enter into fellowship with one another because they have all agreed to accept one another, regardless of what antagonisms or tensions may arise. And who agree to give themselves to one another unreservedly. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

Once Christians in this fashion recognize the truth they teach, namely, that God is at hand to every one, they may be willing to practise it among themselves. Once they acknowledge, with Jesus, that all men are essentially as they themselves, no more sinning and no less loving, no more forgivable and no less unforgivable, no more God-like and no less animal-like, utterly knowable and ultimately open to new life--then they can sit down together in the continual process of creative conflict involved in eternally having their differences, and their agreements, out'

This is real faith, ecumenical faith, the substance of things hoped for and the knowledge of things yet unseen. It is existential adventuring in the eternally present realm of God. It is the Christian revelation to a divided church and a broken world. It cannot be received



except it break past habits and attitudes and traditions in the individual, a process so painful to most men and women that they quite frankly are unwilling to take the risk. But it is the ecumenical risk. It is released from the old law of denominationalism, into the new life of ecumenism. Regardless of details, in some such existential experience of mutual and reciprocal self-committment is to be found the gracious God of every twentieth century Luther. It is the hope of the world: UT OMNES UNUM SINT.



BIBLIOGRAPHY CHAPTER XIII

- BLEEKER, C. J. "Does Liberal Christianity Belong to the Una Sancta?"
- YORK, Archbishop of, "Towards Christian Unity", CHRISTENDOM, Winter 1938.
- OLDHAM, J. H. "Church, Community and State", London, S. C. M., 1935.
- MORRISON, C. C. "Jesus Christ as God and Saviour", CHRISTENDOM, Autumn, 1938.
- CONSTITUTION, "Proposed Constitution for the World Council of Churches", CHRISTENDOM, Summer, 1938.
- VISSER t'HOOFT, W. A. "What is the World Council of Churches", CHRISTENDOM, Winter 1939.
- REPORT, "On the Second World Conference on Faith and Order", Edinburgh, Turnbull and Spears, 1937.
- REPORT, "The Message and Decision of Oxford on Church, Community and State", New York, 1937.
- REPORT, "Madras Conference" (See Ch. X)
- BUCKHAM, J.W., "The Creed Of The World Council Of Christian Churches, HIBBERT JOURN., April, '40.  
(-the files of CHRISTENDOM 1935-1940 have been invaluable as background material for the whole thesis.)





## Chapter XIII

CONCLUSION

The chief result of the discussion has been to reveal the basic problem involved in the movement for reunion of the churches. On the one hand it is evident that Christians have never agreed in matters of belief; nor are they likely to do so in the future.<sup>1</sup> Yet on the other hand the situation has emerged where an ecumenical church, a church "of the inhabited world", is not only desirable but appears possible. Christian problems have become world problems and transcend every statement of them in terms of individual cultures or national viewpoints. What kind of a Christianity can meet both the need for a united church and the need for divergency of belief?

---

1

See the footnote on p. 265(supra); also p. 188. It is notable that the present suggested creed for the World Council of Churches("I believe in Jesus Christ as God and Saviour"), while it has been formally accepted by some sixty-five churches, has been sharply criticized by many individual Christians as "irreconcilable with the historic witness of Christian experience and Christian theology."(cf. BUCKHAM, article listed in the preceding chapter)



A new criticism of Christian history and Christian theology is necessary. The problems of ecumenism are not solved by the study of history, or by doctrinal beliefs formed in the past. A new phase of world history has emerged. Scientific history and historical theology will be indispensable; but only that doctrine, and only those accounts of past events will be relevant which carry meaning from the past to the present sufficient to meet the needs of the future.

Christian problems have become more complex. Above all else there is required a sense for realistic prophecy in those who attempt their solution. God's world, in travail, is becoming one world. How, under these circumstances, is the lordship of Jesus Christ to be construed? What are the needs of such a world? What are God's demands upon it? These are perennial questions. But more than ever must the answers to them be given in terminology that is not anachronous, and in a manner that actually faces up to the realities of the present world situation. And they must be discovered ecumenically, that is by the joint effort of all who call themselves





Christian. This last is the new factor which requires a redefinition of both the function and belief of the church.

The task of the ecumenical movement is not merely the formal union of the existing churches through a World Council. It presupposes the incursion of new life, a changed attitude towards the place and function of Christianity and church membership.

---











**B29747**